In winter's tedious nights,
sit by the fire
With good old folks,
and let them tell thee tales.
Shakespeare.

INDIAN FOLK-TALES

BY THE LATE

PANDIT S. M. NATESA SASTRI

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

The Hon'ble Mr. A. G. CARDEW, M.A., I.C.S.

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PANDIT S. M. NATESA SASTRI, B.A., M.F.L.S.

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Printed at the Guardian Press

1908

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of a second edition of Pandit S. M. Natesa Sastri's well-known collection of South-Indian tales supplies sufficient evidence of the popularity to which his stories have attained. He himself in his preface to the first edition indicated the source from which he drew his inspiration. Gift-ed with a natural taste for story-telling he eagerly listened to the tales which in his youth cir-culated in his village. His retentive memory was thus early stored with an admirable assortment of the *märchen* of the country, and he never neglected later opportunities of adding to his *repertoire* until his untimely death put an end to his career. He also possessed a facility of invention which left him at no loss to supply deficiencies when his memory failed. Like Sir Walter Scott, he united the talents of a *raconteur* and the tastes of an antiqua-rian. He collected the stories current on the coun-try-side and mingled with them the fruits of his own invention. How far his tales adhere to the tradi-tional form can be correctly estimated only by a native of the country who has himself heard them from the lips of untutored narrators. Occasionally one sees traces of the re-forming processes to

which the stories have been subjected in the mind of the author, as when in the tale of the Soothsayer's Son we read the Nagaraja's prophecy: "The percentage of death by snake-bite and tigers shall increase from this day." Here the official training of the writer seems to have momentarily overpowered the afflatus of the story-teller. But in the main there is no reason to think that Pandit Natesa Sastri's tales are not faithful reproductions of the folklore of the country. They contain the artless stories which circulated from mouth to mouth in the days before the printing press had substituted written for oral composition. They are to Southern India what the Thousand and One Nights and other similar collections are to Northern Asia. They represent the traditional invention of the people.

It is on the rescue of these popular tales from oblivion that Pandit Natesa Sastri's claim to recollection will chiefly rest. His own avowed romances are meritorious productions, but they hardly possess permanent value. But his reproduction of the stories he learnt at his mother's knee will always retain an interest proportionate to their faithfulness. Many of the legends embody interesting historical allusions, such as the references to the forgotten kingdom of Punganur or to the Emperor of Dharapura to whom the fifty-six kings of the world did homage. In the course of the tales we get vivid pictures

of the life of the country when the Kings of Vijayanagar still flourished, when the Setupatis ruled in Madura, and the Empire of Chandragiri prevailed over South India. We are introduced to the rough and ready methods of justice, such as even now prevail in unadulterated oriental states like Afghanistan, where the guilt or innocence of the accused is determined by the acumen of the Raja, and where the punishment, often bloody and cruel, follows sharp upon the decision. No troublesome appeals or petitions impede the administration of justice, which, if it is not impeccable, is at least prompt. We see how the Princes of those days chose their ministers and officers. They were not trammelled either by the Matriculation examination or by the Accountant-General, and if they made a mistake now and then. why, it was easily rectified. We are made acquainted with the prison of the country, the exact counterpart of that which exists at the present moment in Kabul, "a dark cellar underground, built with strong stone walls into which any criminal guilty of a capital offence was ushered to breathe his last without food and drink." In spite of the terrors of such punishments we find bands of robbers or dacoits living in the dense jungles which covered a great part of the country, and preying on the cloth merchants who travelled in cavalcades from town to town selling their goods. India in those days was not more a

land of wealth than she is now. There were a few rich men, millionaires, our author, with a natural exaggeration, terms them, but the bulk of the people were poor. The Brahman priest's income was only two fanams a day, and we see clearly that the means of others were on the same scale. The people, patient as ever, generally thrifty, struggling against adverse seasons, fleeced by astrologers, true and false, and by a legion of other impostors, worried by their wives or their mothers-in-law, marrying and giving in marriage, make up the back-ground of the picture, and show how little India has substantially changed since the days to which these stories relate. All this is to be found in the pages of Pandit Natesa Sastri's tales. Written as they are in a foreign language, though by a man who had attained a very considerable mastery of the English tongue, they cannot be expected to posse s the literary charm to be found in some other collections of popular stories, but they undoubtedly have an increasing interest and value which ought long to keep their writer's name from oblivion.

OOTACAMUND,
25th April 1908.

A. G. CARDEW.

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PANDIT S. M. NATESA SASTRI

[*From "Men and Women of India"*]

The late Pandit S. M. Natesa Sastri, B. A., M. F. L. S., whose death under exceptionally tragic circumstances occurred on the 12th April 1906 in Madras, is familiarly known to the public as a popular and facile author of Tamil works and an enthusiastic explorer in the fields of South Indian folklore, archæology and customs. A life-long student of epigraphy, numismatics and kindred subjects, his efforts to enrich modern Tamil literature were indefatigable. He first came into prominence by his stories for the young and similar publications, and with the experience gained in the production of these works, he set himself to write for a wider circle of Tamil readers, producing scores of popular and entertaining works. His efforts to supply light and wholesome literature for Tamil-reading men and women have led to the production of as many as twenty-three separate volumes, consisting of a few original works of fiction, some translations of Shakespeare's plays and Sanskrit dramas and several adaptations from standard English and Sanskrit works; but the work by which his name will live, his *magnum opus* in fact, is a complete and literal translation in Tamil prose of the *Ramayana* of Valmiki.

Mr. Natesa Sastri was born in August 1859 in the Trichinopoly District. He had the misfortune to lose his mother at a tender age, and the tiny orphan's extreme fondness and fascination for stories soon made him a favourite with every old dame and story-teller in the village. He regaled his idle hours by listening to their wild tales of

the marvellous, thus early imbibing a taste for fiction. This taste became so developed that before he reached the age of ten, he had heard almost all that any man or woman in the village could tell him ; and he soon gathered round him knots of eager little listeners whom, in his boyish pride, he kept listening in silent wonder to his many witty stories. These stories by constant repetition and narration became firmly rooted in his memory. In after years, the perusal of Sir Richard Temple's contributions in the *Indian Antiquary* induced him to utilize his early knowledge of these popular stories as important contributions to folklore. He accordingly published a collection of them in Tamil, and subsequently brought out an English version in four parts entitled "Folklore in South India."

Mr. Natesa Sastri began life as a Pandit in the Government Archæological Department under Mr. Robert Sewell, I. C. S., in February 1881. In that capacity, he travelled throughout the Madras Presidency and portions of Bombay, exploring and studying antiquities. His public service of nearly a quarter of a century, however, was a chequered and variegated one. He served in various departments, and though everywhere appreciated for his integrity, intelligence and earnest devotion to duty, he repeatedly quitted them to enter new departments. During 1884-85 he accompanied Mr. E. B. Havell, now Principal of the Calcutta School of Art, on tour through various districts of the Presidency. His evidence before the Public Service Commission, advocating the claims of educated Indians and their special aptitude for archæological research, was marked by an independence which was a notable trait in his character ; but it served ever after as a bar to that

official preferment and personal recognition to which his scholarship and great abilities fully qualified him. He served for some time in the Board of Revenue in the subordinate ranks. In 1886 he joined the Mysore Archæological Survey, but shortly relinquished it for the post of Head Accountant of the Office of the Inspector-General of Jails, Ootacamund. In this capacity he served under Mr. A. G. (now the Hon'ble Mr.) Cardew, and on his recommendation was transferred in 1893 to the Local and Municipal Secretariat. Here he was employed till 1900, when he entered the Registration Department. In 1903 he was on special duty in connection with the revision of the *Bellary District Gazetteer.* At the time of his death he was the Manager of the Office of the Inspector-General of Registration. In every capacity he won the confidence and esteem of those with whom he came in contact and made many friends, European and Indian, who had a great respect for his character and capability and with whom he carried on correspondence on subjects of folklore and antiquarian interest.

A popular Tamil writer, he professed no claims to literary scholarship. An excellent judge of the palate of those for whom he catered, he saw that the Tamil language, often the vehicle of poetic thought or the religious metaphysics of laboured prose composition, could be made to convey in simple guise and for the edification and enlightenment of the masses, the realities of practical life and its lessons. His series of six popular novels, published in 1902-03, are thus marked by the simple, easy, and chaste style in which they are written, and the freedom from the defects which characterise the composition of orthodox Pandits. The first of these, *Dinadayalu*, is autobiographical.

It is the story of the life of a self-made young man, who, losing his father early in life, becomes the manager of a joint-family, consisting of his stepmother and her children, and is subjected to the troubles and vexations arising from that position. The second novel, *The Rejuvenation of Komalam*, is a farcical romance of fourteen lively-written and thoroughly amusing chapters. The *Two Orphans* is a clever story written in a taking style and in construction of plot it is far and away the best of the stories that have appeared from the author's facile pen. In *A Wife Condoned*, the leading characters have been drawn from among the products of modern university education in South India, the novel being intended to illustrate the truth of the adage that everything comes to him who waits, that there is nothing in business concerns which honesty of purpose and industry will not achieve, and that the learned succeed in the race for life more surely than the wealthy. *The Mother-in-law in Council*, like the last, is a novel with a purpose. Its main theme, as its name implies, is the evils of the Hindu joint-family system and the undesirable influence which the mother-in-law exercises over family affairs—the mother-in-law here referred to being the mother of the husband and not of the wife. His *Curtain Lectures* or *Pillow Initiation*, as it is styled in Tamil, proved a great success. At the request of Col. Porteous, Inspector-General of Police, he brought out in 1894 *Tales of an Indian Detective*—being the first work of its kind in Tamil.

The following are among his chief English publications:—*Hindu Feasts, Fasts and Ceremonies*, being a description of popular customs and practices, based on an examination of Hindu mythology, with an introduction

by Mr. H. K. Beauchamp, C. I. E. (1903); *The Dravidian Nights Entertainments*, translated from the Tamil romance *Madanakamarajankadai*, and consisting of a general or leading story into which are woven a series of tales appropriate to the circumstances which led to their narration (1886); *The King and his Four Ministers*, with an introduction by Mr. W. A. Clouston, of Glasgow (1888); *Topographical Notes on Kanchi*, and *Tales of Tennalirama*.

Mr. Natesa Sastri was a graduate of the Madras University and a pupil of such distinguished educationists as Messrs. Thompson, Porter and Gopala Rao; and he made a name for himself by incessant study and exemplary devotion to literary work. His thirst for knowledge was unbounded, and he was always at something useful. A hard-working official all his life, he found time for intellectual pursuits. His industry was prodigious—he shunned delights and lived laborious days. A born story-teller, a competent translator of Sanskrit Classics, the first writer of novels in Tamil after the English model, possessed of considerable linguistic attainments, genial, jovial, and estimable withal, he was a true type of a cultured Indian gentleman. Only recently he brought out the last work from his pen, a primer of "Hygiene in Tamil." His translations of Kalidasa's *Kumarasambhava* and that Hindustani classic *Bagh-o-Bahar* remain unpublished for want of funds. He was a frequent contributor to the *Indian Antiquary*, the *Madras Mail*, the *Folklore Journal*, the *Sen Tamil* and other well-known periodicals. His death in the prime of life, the result of an untoward accident, has deprived Southern India of a good man and a notable scholar. Deep public sympathy is felt for his large family of a widow and eleven children, to whom his loss must prove a great blow.

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PREFACE

As many of my friends have suggested that I should state the source from which and the part of the country in which I heard the stories narrated in this volume (pages 1-239), I have thought it advisable to give, in a few prefatory remarks, some details of my private life which throw light on the subject.

I am a native of the Trichinopoly District and was in my early days brought up in the villages of Lalgudi and Kulitalai, where my parents lived. From my childhood, stories and tales had a great fascination for me, and I was therefore a favourite with every old dame in my family, who, being disabled by age from doing any household work, was glad to beguile her hours by playing upon my sense of the marvellous. Moreover, having had the misfortune to lose my mother at a very early age, I was probably regarded as a fit object of compassion, and every story-teller in the village would readily comply with the poor orphan's request for a story. I thus early acquired an aptitude for tales, and this was considerably improved from the fact that my father's second wife happened to be a great repository of this kind of learning. Unlike the step-mother of fiction, she was very kind to me, and used to spend all her leisure moments in amusing her step-son. So, before I had reached the age of ten my taste for stories had become largely developed, and I had heard almost all that any man or woman in the village had to tell. By constant repetition and narration these tales became firmly rooted in my memory, and it was the greatest pleasure of my boyhood to amuse knots of eager listeners of about the

same age as myself with side-splitting tales. Soon, however, my story-hearing and story-telling propensity had to lie dormant, fo rmore serious studies intervened, and, until I had passed through college, I gave but little thought as to the use to which I could turn the peculiar knowledge acquired in my younger days. Afterwards, in 1881, I entered the Archæological Survey Department, and became a regular reader of the *Indian Antiquary*. The perusal of Captain Temple's excellent contributions in that journal made me conscious for the first time that I could utilize my early knowledge of folk-tales in the advancement of folklore literature. I first wrote the tales I remembered in Tamil, and then through the kind encouragement afforded me by Captain Temple, to whom I feel very much indebted, I was able to publish an English edition of the same.

Such is the short history of the source from which my tales are derived, and this is the origin of my humble work which I now respectfully beg to place before the public

MADRAS,
December 1887. S. M. N.

The fourth part (pages 240-408) contains the stories that I have been contributing to the *Indian Antiquary* between the years 1888 and 1893. The origin of these stories is the same as that of those in the first three parts except one, "The Wise Men of Punganur," No. 36 in my series, which was related to me by a friend of mine belonging to the North Arcot District.

Brodie's Road,
Mylapore—Madras, November 1893. S. M. N.

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FOLKLORE IN SOUTHERN INDIA

I

THE STORY OF THE THREE DEAF MEN

When any awkward blunder occurs from a person acting under a mistaken notion, there is a common proverb in Tamil to the effect that the matter ended like the story of the three deaf men—*(Muchchevidan kadaiyay mudindàdu).* The following is the story told to explain the allusion :—

In a remote village there lived a husband and wife. Both of them were quite deaf. They had made this household arrangement, to cook cabbage with tamarind and soup without tamarind one day, and cabbage without tamarind and soup with tamarind on the other. Thus on every alternate day the same dishes were being repeated. One day, when taking his meal, the husband found the tamarind cabbage so very tasteful that he wanted to have it also next day, and gave instructions to that effect. The deaf wife did not understand the order. According to the established rule she cooked cabbage without tamarind next day. The husband when he sat down to his meal found his order disregarded and, being enraged thereat, threw the cabbage against the wall, and went out in a rage. The wife ate her bellyful, and prepared tamarind cabbage for her husband.

The husband went out, and sat down in a place where three roads crossed, to calm down his anger. At that time a neatherd happened to pass that way. He had lately lost a good cow and calf of his, and had been seeking them for some days. When he saw the deaf man sitting by the way,

he took him for a soothsayer, and asked him to find out by his knowledge of *Joshyam* where the cow would likely be found. The herdsman, too, was very deaf; and the man, without hearing what he was saying, abused him, and wished to be left undisturbed. In abusing him the husband stretched out his hand, pointing to the neatherd's face. This pointing the neatherd understood to indicate the direction where the lost cow and calf would be found. So thinking, the poor neatherd went on in that direction, promising to present the soothsayer with the calf if he found it there with the cow. To his joy, and by mere chance he found them. His delight knew no bounds. "That is a capital soothsayer. Surely I must present him with the calf." So thought he with himself, and returned with them to the deaf man, and pointing to the calf requested him to accept it.

Now it unfortunately happened that the calf's tail was broken, and crooked. The man thought the herdsman was blaming him unreasonably for having broken the calf's tail, while he knew nothing about it, and so by a wave of his hand denied the charge. This the neatherd mistook for a refusal of the calf, and a demand for the cow. The neatherd said, "How very greedy you are! I promised you only the calf, and not the cow." The husband said, "Never; I know nothing of either your cow or calf. I never broke the calf's tail. Some other must have done it." Thus they were quarrelling without understanding each other for a long time, when a third party happened to pass by. Understanding the subject well, and desiring to profit by their stupidity, he interfered and said in a loud voice, and yet so as not to be heard by the deaf husband, "Well, neatherd, you had better go away with the cow. The

Soothsayers are always greedy. Leave the calf with me, and I shall make him accept it." The neatherd, much pleased to have secured the cow, walked home, leaving the calf with the third person. When the neatherd had gone the passenger said to the deaf man, "You see how very unlawful it is for the neatherd to charge you with an offence which you never committed. It is always the case with neatherds. They are the biggest fools in the world! But never mind, so long as you have a friend in me. I shall somehow explain to him your innocence, and restore him the calf." The husband, much pleased, ran home to escape from the supposed guilt. At the expense of the stupidity and deafness of both, the third passenger walked home with the calf.

The husband on his return sat down for his dinner, and his wife served him the tamarind cabbage. He happened to put his finger to the place where the cabbage without tamarind had previously been served on the leaf. On applying it to his mouth he found it so very sweet that he demanded that dish again. The wife replied to him that she had already emptied the pan. "Then at least bring me the cabbage that is sticking against the wall," said the husband; and the wife did accordingly.

Here ends the story. The latter portion is also said to be the explanation of a proverb that is prevalent in Tamil, —"*Sevuru kiraiyai valichchu podudi sunaiketta muli,*" meaning, "O thou feelingless deaf woman, give me at least the cabbage that is sticking on the wall." This proverb is applied to stubborn wives who would have their own way, and not obey their husbands easily among unrefined society.

x

II

WHY BRAHMANS CANNOT EAT IN THE DARK

Among Hindus, especially among Brahmans of the Madras Presideney—and I now see from personal observation that it is the same in the Bombay Presidency also—there is a custom, while taking their meals, of leaving their food uneaten when it so happens that from any cause the light is blown out. Of course this could occur only in the night-time. Such mishaps now-a-days take place only in poor families sitting down to supper with a single light. Hence the following story, told as the origin of this custom, is being forgotten. It runs as follows:—

In a certain village there lived a Brahman who had an only daughter. She was deeply read in Sanskrit and was of the most charming beauty. He procured a husband for her as deeply read as herself. The betrothal had already taken place. Just after the girl attained her puberty a day was appointed for her nuptials; and the *muhurtta* or auspicious time was fixed at the 10th *ghatika* of that night. On that very evening the son-in-law went to a tank to perform his *Sandhya vandana* or evening prayers. It swarmed with crocodiles. People never went near it. The son-in-law, being quite new to the village, entered the tank without knowing anything of the danger. Unfortunately there was none near to warn him. He had set his foot in the water when a crocodile caught him by the leg and began to drag him. That very night was fixed for his nuptials and a crocodile was taking him to feast on his flesh. He was extremely vexed at the calamity, and said humbly to his enemy, "My friend crocodile! Listen to my words first and then decide for

yourself. A wife, the only daughter of an old Brahman, is waiting for me to-night. If you eat me now you take me away without my seeing her, my father-in-law and other relatives. Their hearts may break at the news of my death on the very day of the wedding. They may all curse you. If, on the contrary, you leave me now, I shall go home, speak to my wife and others about the sad calamity that has come over me, and after embracing and taking leave of her will come to you for your supper at the 15th *ghatika*. Till then leave me." The cruel crocodile, though very fond of human flesh and himself dying of hunger, spared him for a few *ghatikas* at his humble request. After extracting several oaths from him for his return in accordance to his promise the crocodile went into the water.

The son-in-law also went home. All his joys fled away; how could he be pleasant after his promise to the crocodile. Still, to give no uneasiness to the aged parents of his wife he underwent all the ceremonies and entered the bed-room at the 10th *ghatika*. Only five more *ghatikas* remained for him to live in the world, as he thought. He in a few words explained everything to his wife, and asked her permission. She showed no sign of sorrow, preached to him about the iron hand of fate, and that he must undergo what was written on his forehead. She most willingly gave him permission, and he returned to the tank even a *ghatika* earlier and called the crocodile, who came and seized him.

At this moment a certain light glittered before the eyes of the crocodile and vanished. It was a woman that did it. The wife, after consoling her husband and preaching

to him about the supremacy of fate, had accompanied him unobserved with a lighted lamp concealed in a vessel. Just when the crocodile applied his teeth to the leg of her husband, she took the lamp out, showed it before the crocodile, and quenched it. Nor did it go without its intended effect. The crocodile left the husband to himself and said, "You had better go now. I will never touch you after a lamp was quenched when I began my meals to-day." The husband was astonished at the device of his wife and still more at the faithful observance of a rule in an unreasonable beast. From that day it was fixed that men, who are more reasonable, should never eat when the lamp is blown out.

Another story is told. In a remote village there lived a poor woman who laboured from morning till night in different houses and returned to her hut with two measures of rice. The quantity would serve for ten ordinary persons. Being extremely poor she used to keep no lamp, but cook her rice in the dark, only guided by the light of the fire. When she sat down for her meals even the light of the fire decayed. So she had to eat in the dark. Though she used the full two measures of rice that she brought every day her hunger was never satisfied. She was always in extreme want.

Now it so happened that she had a younger sister who was somewhat richer than herself. The younger came to see her elder sister. The former never used to be without a light, and so asked her sister to buy some oil that night and light a lamp. The elder was compelled by necessity to do so ; for that she devoted a portion of her two measures of rice and returned home with great uneasiness and perplexity of mind as to how less than two measures would

furnish their supper that night, while full two measures were found insufficient on former occasions for herself alone. The lamp was set for the first time in her house and she cooked the remaining rice. The younger sister was astonished to see her using so much for two. The elder, thinking with herself that the younger would soon see her mistake, cooked everything. Two leaves were spread and they sat down to their supper. Not even a fourth part of the rice in the pot was consumed, but already they were satisfied. The younger sister laughed at the foolishness of her elder, who now said, " I do not know what magic you have in you. Every day I cook two measures of rice and fast the whole night, without finding them sufficient for myself. Now a fourth of less than two measures has satisfied both. Please explain the cause. " The younger sister, who was very intelligent herself, wanted to find out the cause, and asked her sister the next day to serve the meals without the lamp. Instead of eating she stretched her hand in front and caught a lock of hair. She asked the other at once to light the lamp, which being done there was a devil sitting before her. On being questioned how he came there he said that he was used thus to go to every one who ate without a lamp, and swallow the meals fast without leaving him a morsel. The elder sister perceived her mistake and used a lamp from that day. The demon ceased to come. She had abundance for herself and something to spare. So when the lamp is blown out devils are said to come and eat out of our leaves. Hence is the custom to rise whenever such mishaps occur.

III

THE SOOTHSAYER'S SON

"Janma prabhriti daridryam dasavarshani bandhanam

Samudratire maranam kinchit bhogam bhavishyati."

Thus a Soothsayer when on his death-bed wrote the horoscope of his second son, and bequeathed it to him as his only property, leaving the whole of his estate to his eldest son. The second son pondered over the horoscope, and fell into the following contemplations :—

"Alas, am I born to this only in the world? The saying of my father never failed. I have seen them prove true to the last word while he was living; and how has he fixed my horoscope! *Janma prabhriti daridryam!* From my birth poverty! I am not to be in that miserable condition alone. *Dasa varshani bandhanam*: for ten years, imprisonment—a fate harder than poverty; and what comes next? *Samudratire maranam*: death on the seashore; which means that I must die away from home, far from friends and relatives on a seacoast. The misery has reached its extreme height here. Now comes the funniest part of the horoscope. *Kinchit bhogam bhavishyati*—that I am to have some happiness afterwards! What this happiness is, is an enigma to me: To die first, to be happy for some time after! What happiness? Is it the happiness of this world? So it must be. For however clever one may be, he cannot foretell what may take place in the other world. Therefore it must be the happiness of this world; and how can that be possible after my death? It is impossible. I think my father has only meant this as a consoling conclusion to the series of calamities that he has prophesied. Three

portions of his prophecy must prove true; the fourth and last is a mere comforting statement to bear patiently the calamities enumerated, and never to prove true. Therefore let me go to Benares, bathe in the holy Ganga, wash away my sins, and prepare myself for my end. Let me avoid sea-coasts, lest death meet me there in accordance with my father's words. Come imprisonment: I am prepared for it for ten years."

Thus thought he, and after all the funeral obsequies of his father were over, took leave of his elder brother, and started for Benares. He went by the middle of the Deccan, avoiding both the coasts, and went on journeying and journeying for weeks and months, till at last he reached the Vindhya mountains. While passing that desert he had to journey for a couple of days through a sandy plain, with no signs of life or vegetation. The little store of provision with which he was provided for a couple of days, at last was exhausted. The *chombu*, which he carried always full, replenishing it with the sweet water from the flowing rivulet or plenteous tank, he had exhausted in the heat of the desert. There was not a morsel in his hand to eat; nor a drop of water to drink. Turn his eyes wherever he might he found a vast desert, out of which he saw no means of escape. Still he thought within himself, "Surely my father's prophecy never proved untrue. I must survive this calamity to find my death on some sea-coast." So thought he, and this thought gave him strength of mind to walk fast and try to find a drop of water somewhere to slake his dry throat. At last he succeeded, or rather thought that he succeeded. Heaven threw in his way a ruined well. He thought that he could collect some water if he let down his *chombu* with the string that he always carried noosed to the neck

of it. Accordingly he let it down; it went some way and stopped, and the following words came from the well, "Oh, relieve me! I am the king of tigers, dying here of hunger. For the last three days I have had nothing. Fortune has sent you here. If you assist me now you will find a sure help in me throughout your life. Do not think that I am a beast of prey. When you have become my deliverer I can never touch you. Pray kindly lift me up." Gangadhara, for that was the name of the Soothsayer's second son, found himself in a very perplexing position. "Shall I take him out or not? If I take him out he may make me the first morsel of his hungry mouth. No ; that he will not do. For my father's prophecy never came untrue. I must die on a sea-coast and not by a tiger." Thus thinking, he asked the tiger-king to hold tight the vessel, which he accordingly did, and he lifted him up slowly. The tiger reached the top of the well and felt himself on safe ground. True to his word he did no harm to Gangadhara. On the other hand, he went round his patron three times, and standing before him, humbly spoke the following words:—"My life-giver, my benefactor! I shall never forget this day, when I regained my life through your kind hands. In return for this kind assistance I pledge my oath to stand by you in all calamities. Whenever you are in any difficulty just think of me. I am there with you ready to oblige you by all the means that I can. To tell you briefly how I came in here:—Three days ago I was roaming in yonder forest, when I saw a goldsmith passing through it. I chased him. He, finding it impossible to escape my claws, jumped into this well, and is living to this moment in the very bottom of it. I also jumped,

but found myself in the first storey; he is on the last and fourth storey. In the second storey lives a serpent half-famished with hunger. In the third storey lies a rat, similarly half-famished, and when you again begin to draw water these may request you first to release them. In the same way the goldsmith also may request. I tell you, as your bosom friend, never assist that wretched man, though he is your relation as a human being. Goldsmiths are never to be trusted. You can place more faith in me, a tiger, though I feast sometimes upon men, in a serpent whose sting makes your blood cold the very next moment, or in a rat, which does a thousand mischiefs in your house. But never trust a goldsmith. Do not release him; and if you do, you shall surely repent of it one day or other." Thus advising, the hungry tiger went away without waiting for an answer.

Gangadhara thought several times of the eloquent way in which the tiger addressed him, and admired his fluency of speech. His thirst was not quenched. So he let down his vessel again, which was now caught hold of by the serpent, who addressed him thus :— "Oh, my protector! lift me up. I am the king of serpents, and the son of Adisesha, who is now pining away in agony for my disappearance. Release me now. I shall ever remain your servant, remember your assistance, and help you throughout life in all possible ways. Oblige me: I am dying." Gangadhara, calling again to mind the *Samudratire maranam*—death on the sea-shore—lifted him up. He, like the tiger-king, circumambulated him thrice, and prostrating himself before him spoke thus :—" Oh my life giver, my father, for so I must call you, as you have given me another birth, I have already told you that I am

Adisesha's son, and that I am the king of serpents. I was three days ago basking myself in the morning sun, when I saw a rat running before me. I chased it. He fell into this well. I followed him, but instead of falling on the third storey where he is now lying, I fell into the second. It was on the same evening that the goldsmith also fell down on the fourth storey, and the tiger whom you released just before me fell down into the first. What I have to tell you now is—do not relieve the goldsmith, though you may release the rat. As a rule, goldsmiths are never to be trusted. I am going away now to see my father. Whenever you are in any difficulty just think of me. I will be there by your side to assist you by all possible means. If, notwithstanding my repeated advice, you happen to release the goldsmith, you shall suffer for it severely." So saying, the Nagaraja (serpent-king) glided away in zigzag movements, and was out of sight in a moment.

The poor son of the Soothsayer who was now almost dying of thirst, and was even led to think that the messengers of death were near him, notwithstanding his firm belief in the words of his father, let down his vessel for a third time. The rat caught hold of it, and without discussing, he lifted up the poor animal at once. But it would not go without showing its eloquence—"Oh life of my life, my benefactor: I am the king of rats. Whenever you are in any calamity just think of me. I will come to you, and assist you. My keen ears overheard all that the tiger-king and serpent-king told you about the Svarnataskara (*gold-smith*), who is in the fourth storey. It is nothing but a sad truth that goldsmiths ought never to be trusted. Therefore never assist him as you have done to us all. And if you do you shall feel it. I am hungry; let me go for the present." Thus taking leave of his benefactor, the rat, too, ran away.

Gangadhara for a while thought upon the repeated advice given by the three animals about releasing the goldsmith, "What wrong would there be in my assisting him. Why should I not release him also." So thinking to himself Gangadhara let down the vessel again. The goldsmith caught hold of it, and demanded help. The Soothsayer's son had no time to lose; he was himself dying of thirst. Therefore he lifted the goldsmith up, who now began his story :—"Stop for a while," said Gangadhara, and after quenching his thirst by letting down his vessel for the fifth time, still fearing that some one might remain in the well and demand his assistance, he listened to the goldsmith, who began as follows:—"My dear friend, my protector, what a deal of nonsense these brutes were talking to you about me; I am glad you have not followed their advice. I am just now dying of hunger. Permit me to go away. My name is Manikkasari. I live in the East main street of Ujjaini, which is 20 *kos* to the south of this place, and so lies on your way when you return from Benares. Do not forget to come to me and receive my kind remembrances of your assistance, on your way back to your country." So saying the goldsmith took his leave, and Gangadhara also pursued his way north after the above adventures.

He reached Benares, and lived there for more than ten years, spending his time in bathing, prayers, and other religious ceremonies. He quite forgot the tiger, serpent, rat, and goldsmith. After ten years of religious life, thoughts of home and his brother rushed into his mind. "Enough of the merit that I have secured till now by my religious observances. Let me return home." Thus thought Gangadhara within himself, and immediately he was

on his way back to his country. Remembering the prophecy of his father he returned by the same way by which he went to Benares ten years before. While thus retracing his steps he reached that ruined well where he released the three brute kings and the goldsmith. At once the old recollections rushed into his mind, and he thought of the tiger to test his fidelity. Only a moment passed, and the tiger-king came running before him carrying a large crown in his mouth, the glitter of the diamonds of which for a time outshone even the bright rays of the sun. He dropped the crown at his life-giver's feet, and leaving off all his pride, humbled himself like a pet cat to the strokes of his protector, and began in the following words:—"My life-giver ! How is it that you forgot me, your poor servant, for so long a time. I am glad to find that I still occupy a corner in your mind. I can never forget the day when I owed my life to your lotus hands. I have several jewels with me of little value. This crown, being the best of all, I have brought here as a single ornament of great value, and hence easily portable and useful to you in your own country." Gangadhara looked at the crown, examined it over and over, counted and recounted the gems, and thought within himself that he would become the richest of men by separating the diamonds and gold, and selling them in his own country. He took leave of the tiger-king, and after his disappearance thought of the kings of serpents and rats, who came in their turns with their presents, and after the usual formalities and exchange of words took their leave. Gangadhara was extremely delighted at the faithfulness with which the brute beasts behaved themselves, and went on his way to the south. While going along he spoke to himself thus:—"These

beasts have been so very faithful in their assistance. Much more, therefore, must Manikkasari be faithful. I do not want anything from him now. If I take this crown with me as it is, it occupies much space in my bundle. It may also excite the curiosity of some robbers on the way. I will go now to Ujjaini on my way. Manikkasari requested me to see him without failure on my return-journey. I shall do so, and request him to have the crown melted, the diamonds and golds separated. He must do that kindness at least for me. I shall then roll up these diamonds and gold ball in my rags, and bend my way home." Thus thinking and thinking he reached Ujjaini. At once he enquired for the house of his goldsmith friend, and found him without difficulty. Manikasari was extremely delighted to find on his threshold im who ten years before, notwithstanding the advice re-eatedly given him by the sage-looking tiger, serpent, and it, had relieved him from the pit of death. Gangadhara it once showed him the crown that he received from the ger-king, told him how he got it, and requested his kind ssistance to separate the gold and diamonds. Manikka-ari agreed to do so, and meanwhile asked his friend to st himself for a while to have his bath and meals; and angadhara, who was very observant of his religious cere-onies, went direct to the river to bathe.

How came a crown in the jaws of a tiger? It is not ifficult question to solve. A king must have furnished table of the tiger for a day or two. Had it not been that, the tiger could not have had a crown with him. en so it was. The king of Ujjaini had a week before ne with all his hunters on a hunting expedition. All

on a sudden a tiger—as we know now, the very tiger-king himself—started from the wood, seized the king, and vanished. The hunters returned and informed the prince about the sad calamity that had befallen his father. They all saw the tiger carrying away the king. Yet such was their courage that they could not lift their weapons to bring to the prince the corpse at least of his father; their courage reminds us of the couplet in the *Child's Story* :—

> "Four and twenty sailors went to kill a snail;
> The best man among them dares not touch her tail."

When they informed the prince about the death of his father he wept and wailed, and gave notice that he would give half of his kingdom to any one who shoul bring him news about the murderer of his father. Th prince did not at all believe that his father was devoured by the tiger. His belief was that some hunters, coveting the ornaments on the king's person, hac murdered him. Hence he had issued the notice. Th goldsmith knew full well that it was a tiger that killed th king, and not any hunter's hands, since he had heard fror Gangadhara about how he obtained the crown. Stil ambition to get half the kingdom prevailed, and h resolved with himself to make over Gangadhara a the king's murderer. The crown was lying o the floor where Gangadhara left it with his full con dence in Manikkasari. Before his protector's retu the goldsmith, hiding the crown under his garments, fl to the palace. He went before the prince and inform him that the assassin was caught, and placed the crov before him. The prince took it into his hands, examine

it, and at once gave half the kingdom to Manikkasari, and then enquired about the murderer. He is bathing in the river, and is of such and such appearance, was the reply. At once four armed soldiers fly to the river, and bind hand and foot the poor Brahman, who sits in meditation, without any knowledge of the fate that hangs over him. They brought Gangadhara to the presence of the prince, who turned his face away from the murderer or supposed murderer, and asked his soldiers to throw him into the *karagriham*. In a minute, without knowing the cause, the poor Brahman found himself in the dark caves of the *karagriham*.

In old times the *karagriham* answered the purpose of the modern jail. It was a dark cellar underground, built with strong stone walls, into which any criminal guilty of a capital offence was ushered to breathe his last there without food and drink. Into such a cellar Gangadhara was pushed down. In a few hours after he left the goldsmith he found himself inside a dark cell stinking with human bodies, dying and dead. What were his thoughts when he reached that place? "It is the goldsmith that has brought me to this wretched state; and, as for the prince: Why should he not enquire as to how I obtained the crown? It is of no use to accuse either the goldsmith or the prince now. We are all the children of fate. We must obey her commands. *Dasavarshani bandhanam*. This is but the first day of my father's prophecy. So far his statement is true. But how am I going to pass ten years here? Perhaps without anything to keep up my life I may drag on my existence for a day or two. But how to pass ten years? That cannot be, and I must die. Before death comes let me think of my faithful brute friends."

So pondered Gangadhara in the dark cell underground, and at that moment thought of his three friends. The tiger-king, serpent-king, and rat-king assembled at once with their armies at a garden near the *karagriham*, and for a while did not know what to do. A common cause—how to reach their protector who was now in the dark cell underneath—united them all. They held their council, and decided to make an underground passage from the inside of a ruined well to the *karagriham*. The rat *raja* issued an order at once to that effect to his army. They with their nimble teeth bored the ground a long way to the walls of the prison. After reaching it they found that their teeth could not work on the hard stones. The bandicoots were then specially ordered for the business, they with their hard teeth made a small slit in the wall for a rat to pass and repass without difficulty. Thus a passage was effected.

The rat *raja* entered first to condole with his protector for his calamity. The king of the tigers sent word through the snake-king that he sympathised most sincerely with his sorrow, and that he was ready to render all help for his deliverance. He suggested a means for his escape also. The serpent *raja* went in, and gave Gangadhara hopes of delivery. The rat-king undertook to supply his protector with provisions. "Whatever sweetmeats or bread are prepared in any house, one and all of you must try to bring whatever you can to our benefactor. Whatever clothes you find hanging in a house, cut down, dip the pieces in water and bring the wet bits to our benefactor. He will squeeze them and gather water for drink; and the bread and sweetmeats shall form his food." Thus ordered the king of the rats, and took leave of Gangadhara.

They in obedience to their king's order continued to supply provisions and water.

The Nagaraja said :—"I sincerely condole with you in your calamity ; the tiger-king also fully sympathises with you, and wants me to tell you so, as he cannot drag his huge body here as we have done with our small ones. The king of the rats has promised to do his best to keep up your life. We would now do what we can for your release. From this day we shall issue orders to our armies to oppress all the subjects of this kingdom. The percentage of death by snake-bite and tigers shall increase from this day. And day by day it shall continue to increase till your release. After eating what the rats bring you you had better take your seat near the entrance of the *karagriham.* Owing to the several unnatural deaths some people that walk over the prison might say, 'How unjust the king has turned out now. Were it not for his injustice such early deaths by snake-bite could never occur.' Whenever you hear people speaking so, you had better bawl out so as to be heard by them, 'The wretched prince imprisoned me on the false charge of having killed his father, while it was a tiger that killed him. From that day these calamities have broken out in his dominions. If I were released I would save all by my powers of healing poisonous wounds and by incantation.' Some one may report this to the king, and if he knows it, you will obtain your liberty." Thus comforting his protector in trouble, he advised him to pluck up courage, and serpents, acting under the special orders of their kings, united in killing as many persons and cattle as possible. Every day people were being carried away by tigers or bitten by serpents. This

havoc continued. Gangadhara was roaring as loud as he could that he would save those lives, had he only his liberty. Few heard him. The few that did took his words for the voice of a ghost. "How could he manage to live without food and drink for so long a time ?" said the persons walking over his head to each other. Thus passed on months and years. Gangadhara sat in the dark cellar, without the sun's light falling upon him, and feasted upon the bread-crumbs and sweetmeats that the rats so kindly supplied him with. These circumstances had completely changed his body. He had become a red, stout, huge, unwieldy lump of flesh. Thus passed full ten years, as prophesied in the horoscope—*Dasavarshani bandhanam.*

Ten complete years rolled away in close imprisonment. On the last evening of the tenth year one of the serpents got into the bed-chamber of the princess and sucked her life. She breathed her last. She was the only daughter of the king. He had no other issue—son or daughter. His only hope was in her ; and she was snatched away by a cruel and untimely death. The king at once sent all the snake-bite curers. He promised half his kingdom, and his daughter's hand to him who would restore her to life. Now it was that a servant of the king who had several times overheard Gangadhara's exclamation reported the matter to him. The king at once ordered the cell to be examined. There was the man sitting in it. How has he managed to live so long in the cell ? Some whispered that he must be a divine being. Some concluded that he must surely win the hand of the princess by restoring her to life. Thus they discussed, and the discussions brought Gangadhara to the king.

The king no sooner saw Gangadhara than he fell on the ground. He was struck by the majesty and grandeur of

his person. His ten years' imprisonment in the deep cell underground had given a sort of lustre to his body, which was not to be met with in ordinary persons. His hair had first to be cut before his face could be seen. The king begged forgiveness for his former fault, and requested him to revive his daughter.

"Bring me in a *muhurta* all the corpses of men and cattle dying and dead, that remain unburnt or unburied within the range of your dominions; I shall revive them all:" were the only words that Gangadhara spoke. After it he closed his lips as if in deep meditation, which commanded him more respect in the company.

Cart-loads of corpses of men and cattle began to come in every minute. Even graves, it is said, were broken open, and corpses buried a day or two before were taken out and sent for the revival. As soon as all were ready Gangadhara took a vessel full of water and sprinkled it over them all, thinking upon his Nagaraja and Vyaghraraja. All rose up as if from deep slumber, and went to their respective homes. The princess, too, was restored to life. The joy of the king knows no bounds. He curses the day on which he imprisoned him, accuses himself for having believed the word of a goldsmith, and offers him the hand of his daughter and the whole kingdom, instead of half as he promised. Gangadhara would not accept anything. The king requested him to put a stop for ever to those calamities. He agreed to do so, and asked the king to assemble all his subjects in a wood near the town. "I shall there call in all the tigers and serpents and give them a general order." So said Gangadhara, and the king accordingly gave the order. In a couple of *ghatikas* the wood near Ujjaini was full of

people who assembled to witness the authority of man over such enemies of human beings as tigers and serpents. "He is no man; be sure of that. How could he have managed to live for ten years without food and drink? He is surely a god." Thus speculated the mob.

When the whole town was assembled just at the dusk of evening, Gangadhara, sat dumb for a moment and thought upon the Vyaghraraja and Nagaraja, who came running with all their armies. People began to take to their heels at the sight of tigers. Gangadhara assured them of safety, and stopped them.

The grey light of the evening, the pumpkin colour of Gangadhara, the holy ashes scattered lavishly over his body, the tigers and snakes humbling themselves at his feet, gave him the true majesty of the god Gangadhara. For who else by a single word could thus command vast armies of tigers and serpents, said some among the people. "Care not for it; it may be by magic. That is not a great thing. That he revived cart-loads of corpses make him surely Gangadhara," said others. The scene produced very great effect upon the minds of the mob.

"Why should you, my children, thus trouble these poor subjects of Ujjaini? Reply to me, and henceforth desist from your ravages." Thus said the Soothsayer's son, and the following reply came from the king of the tigers; "Why should this base king imprison your honour, believing the mere word of a goldsmith that your honour killed his father? All the hunters told him that his father was carried away by a tiger. I was the messenger of death sent to deal the blow on his neck. I did it

and gave the crown to your honour. The prince makes no enquiry, and at once imprisons your honour. How can we expect justice from such a stupid king as that. Unless he adopts a better standard of justice we will go on with our destruction."

The king heard, cursed the day on which he believed in the word of the goldsmith, beat his head, tore his hair, wept and wailed for his crime, asked a thousand pardons, and swore to rule in a just way from that day. The serpent-king and tiger-king also promised to observe their oath as long as justice prevailed, and took their leave. The goldsmith fled for his life. He was caught by the soldiers of the king, and was pardoned by the generous Gangadhara, whose voice now reigned supreme. All returned to their homes.

The king again pressed Gangadhara to accept the hand of his daughter. He agreed to do so, not then, but some time afterwards. He wished to go and see his elder brother first, and then to return and marry the princess. The king agreed; and Gangadhara left the city that very day on his way home.

It so happened that unwittingly he took a wrong road, and had to pass near a sea coast. His elder brother was also on his way up to Benares by that very same route. They met and recognised each other, even at a distance. They flew into each other's arms. Both remained still for a time without knowing anything. The emotion of a pleasure (*ananda*) was so great, especially in Gangadhara, that it proved dangerous to his life. In a word, he died of joy.

The sorrow of the elder brother could better be imagined than described. He saw again his lost brother, after

having given up, as it were, all hopes of meeting him. He had not even asked him his adventures. That he should be snatched away by the cruel hand of death seemed unbearable to him. He wept and wailed, took the corpse on his lap, sat under a tree, and wetted it with tears. But there was no hope of his dead brother coming to life again.

The elder brother was a devout worshipper of Ganapati. That was a Friday, a day very sacred to that god. The elder brother took the corpse to the nearest Ganesa temple and called upon him. The god came and asked him what he wanted. "My poor brother is dead and gone; and this is his corpse. Kindly keep it under your charge till I finish your worship. If I leave it anywhere else the devils may snatch it away when I am absent in your worship; after finishing your *puja* I shall burn him." Thus said the elder brother, and giving the corpse to the god Ganesa he went to prepare himself for that deity's worship. Ganesa made over the corpse to his *Ganas*, asking them to watch over it carefully.

So receives a spoiled child a fruit from its father, who when he gives it the fruit asks the child to keep it safe. The child thinks within itself, "Papa will excuse me if I eat a portion of it." So saying it eats a portion, and when it finds it so sweet, it eats the whole, saying, "Come what will, what will papa do, after all, if I eat it? Perhaps give me a stroke or two on the back. Perhaps he may excuse me." In the same way these *Ganas* of Ganapati first ate a portion of the corpse, and when they found it sweet, for we know that it was crammed up with the sweetmeats of the kind rats, devoured the whole and were consulting about offering the best excuse possible to their master.

The elder brother, after finishing the *puja*, demanded from the god his brother's corpse. The belly-god called his *Ganas*, who came to the front blinking, and fearing the anger of their master. The god was greatly enraged. The elder brother was highly vexed. When the corpse was not forthcoming he cuttingly remarked, "Is this, after all the return for my deep belief in you? You are unable even to return my brother's corpse." Ganesa was much ashamed at the remark, and at the uneasiness that he had caused to his worshipper, so he by his divine power gave him a living Gangadhara instead of the dead corpse. Thus was the second son of the Soothsayer restored to life.

The brothers had a long talk about each other's adventures. They both went to Ujjaini, where Gangadhara married the princess, and succeeded to the throne of that kingdom. He reigned for a long time, conferring several benefits upon his brother. How is the horoscope to be interpreted? A special synod of soothsayers was held. A thousand emendations were suggested. Gangadhara would not accept them. At last one Soothsayer cut the knot by stopping at a different place in reading, "*Samudra tire maranam kinchit.*" "On the sea shore death for some time. Then *Bhogalm bhavishyati.* There shall be happiness for the person concerned." Thus the passage was interpreted. "Yes my father's words never went wrong," said Gangadhara. The three brute kings continued their visits often to the Soothsayer's son, the then king of Ujjaini. Even the faithless goldsmith became a frequent visitor at the palace, and a receiver of several benefits from the royal hands.

IV

RANAVIRASING

Once upon a time in the town of Vanjaimanagar,[1] there ruled a king, named Sivachar. He was a most just king, and ruled so well that no stone thrown up fell down, no crow pecked at the new drawn milk, the lion and the bull drank water from the same pond, and peace and prosperity reigned throughout the kingdom. Notwithstanding all these blessings, care always sat on his face. The fruit which makes life in this world sweet, the redeemer to him from the horrible Naraka of *Put*, a Putra, he had not. His days and nights he spent in praying that God might bless him with a son. Wherever he saw *pipal* trees *(Asvattharajas)*, he ordered Brahmans to circumambulate them. Whatever medicines the doctors recommended he was ever ready to swallow, however bitter they might be. "Eat even ordure to get a son," says the proverb, and accordingly he did everything to secure that happiness, but all in vain.

Sivachar had a minister, named Kharavadana, a most wicked tyrant as ever lived in the world. The thought that the king was without an heir, and had no hopes of one, awakened in his mind the ambition of securing for his family the throne of Vanjaimanagar. Sivachar knew this well. But what could he do? His only care was to send up additional prayers to frustrate the thoughts of Kharavadana, and to secure for himself a good position after death, without undergoing the severe torments of the *Put*, hell.

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[1] Classical name of Karur, a small but very ancient town in the Coimbatore District of the Madras Presidency.

At last fortune favoured Sivachar; for what religious man fails to secure his desire? The king in his sixtieth year had a son. His joy can better be imagined than described. Lacs of Brahmans were fed in honour of the son-birth festival, *Putrotsavam*, as it is technically called. The state-prisons were opened, and all the prisoners let loose. Thousands of kine and innumerable acres of land were offered to Brahmans, and every kind of charity was duly practised. The ten days of the *Sutikagrihavasa* (confinement) were over. On the eleventh day the father saw his much longed-for son's face, and read on the lines of it great prosperity, learning, valour, goodness, and every excellent quality.

The cradle swinging, naming, and other ceremonies were duly performed, and the prince grew up under the care shown to a king's son. His name the elders fixed as Sundara. The minister, whose only wish was to get the throne for his family, was much disappointed at the birth of a son to his master. The whole kingdom rejoiced at the event, and the minister was the only man who was sorry. When one is disappointed in his high hopes and expectations, he devises plans to take away the barrier that lies in his way. Even so Kharavadana said to himself, "Let me see how the affairs get on. The old king is near his grave. When he dies, leaving a minor son, myself must be his regent for a time. Have I not then opportunity enough of securing for ever for myself and my family the throne of Vanjaimanagar?" So thought he within himself, and was quiet for a time.

Sivachar, who was a very shrewd man, on several occasions read the minister's mind, and knew very well how his intentions stood. "This cruel devil may murder my

only son. I care not if he usurps the throne. What I fear is, that he may murder him. *Na daivam Sankarat param.* No other god but Sankara. And he must have his own way. If it is so written on the prince's head I cannot avoid it." Thus sighed Sivachar, and this sorrow (*soka*) made him leaner day by day. Just ten years after the birth of Sundara, the king fell ill and was on his deathbed.

Sivachar had a servant, named Ranavirasing, whom he had all along observed to be very honest and faithful. That servant the king called to his side, and asking all others except Sundara, who was weeping by his father's pillow, to leave the room, addressed him thus:—"My dear Ranavirasing, I have only a few *ghatikas* before me. Listen to my words, and act accordingly. There is one God above us all, who will punish or reward us according to our bad or good acts. If by avarice or greed of money you ever play false to the trust that I am going to repose in you that God will surely punish you. It is not unknown to you what great difficulties I had in getting this only son, Sundara; how many temples I built, how many Brahmans I fed, how many religious austerities I underwent, etc. God after all gave me a son." Here the king's sorrow prevented him from proceeding further, and he began to cry aloud, and shed tears. "Do not weep on my account, papa! We cannot wipe off what was written on our heads. We must undergo happiness or misery as is thereon scratched by Brahma," cried the prince. Ranavirasing was melted at the sight. He took the boy on his lap, and with his own upper garment wiped his eyes. The old man continued, "Thus you, my faithful Ranavirasing, know everything. I now wish that I had not performed all that I did to get this

son. For when I die at this moment, who is there to take care of him for the next? Kharavadana may devise plan after plan to remove my boy from this world, and secure the kingdom for himself. My only hope is in you. I give him into your hands." Here the aged father notwithstanding his illness, rose up a little from his bed took hold of his son's hand, and after kissing it for the last time, placed it in Ranavirasing's. "Care not if he does not get the kingdom. If you only preserve him from the wicked hands of the minister whom I have all along seen to be covetous of the throne, you will do a great work for your old master. I make you from this moment the lord of my palace. From this minute you are father, mother, brother, servant, and everthing to my son. Take care that you do not betray your trust." Thus ended the king, and sending at once for the minister, when he came he spoke to him thus, "Kharavadana! See what I am now. Yesterday I was on the throne. To-day, in a few minutes, I must breathe my last. Such is the uncertainty of life. Man's good acts alone follow him to the other world. Take my signet-ring. [Here the king took the ring from off his finger, and gave it to the minister.] Yours is the throne for the present, as long as the prince is in his minority. Govern well the kingdom. When the prince attains his sixteenth year kindly give him back the throne. Exercise a paternal care over him. Find a good and intelligent princess for his wife." Suddenly, before his speech was quite finished, the king felt the last pangs of death. The sage-looking minister promised him everything.

Sivachar breathed his last. After the usual weeping and wailing of a Hindu funeral, his corpse was burnt to ashes in a sandalwood pyre. All his queens—and there were

several scores—committed *sati* with the corpse. The ceremonies were all regularly conducted, the minister himself superintended everything.

Kharavadana then succeeded to the throne of Vanjaimanagar. Ranavirasing became the lord of the palace, and true to his promise exercised all care over his trust. He was always by the side of Sundara. That he might not lose the sweetness of boyhood in study and play, Ranavirasing brought to the palace 20 gentlemen's sons of good conduct and learning and made them the prince's fellow-students. A professor for every branch of learning was employed to teach the prince and his companions. Sundara thus received a sound and liberal education, only he was never allowed to go out of the palace. Ranavirasing guarded him very strictly, and he had every reason to do so. For Kharavadana, as soon as he became king, had issued a notice that the assassin of Sundara should have a reward of a *karor* muhrs; and already every avaricious hand was in search of his head. Before the issue of this notice, Kharavadana found out a good girl and married her to the prince. She was living with her husband in the palace, and Ranavirasing strictly watched her, as she came from the minister. He would not allow Sundara to sleep in the same room with her. These strict watches and barriers to the sweet marriage-bed displeased the prince, even with his faithful servant. But the latter could not help it till he had full confidence in her. He used to advise Sundara not even to take a betel-leaf from her hands. But love is blind. So the prince within himself accused his old guardian; but he could not help following his orders. Thus passed on a few years.

Sundara reached his sixteenth year. Nothing happened about the transference of the kingdom; the prince, almost in imprisonment in the palace, had forgot everything about the kingdom. Ranavirasing wished to wait till, as he thought, the prince had acquired better governing faculties. Thus some time passed.

Full eight years had elapsed from the death of Sivachar. Sundara was already eighteen, and still he had not received his kingdom. Nothing was neglected in his education. Though Ranavirasing exercised all paternal care over him, still it was not to his liking; for he found in him a great barrier to the pleasures of youth. The only pleasure for the prince, therefore, was the company of his friends.

One fine evening on the fourteenth day of the dark half of Vaisakha month of the Vasanta season, the prince was sitting with his companions in the seventh storey of his mansion viewing the town. The dusk of evening was just throwing her mantle over the city. People in their several vocations were at that time ceasing work, and returning home. In the eastern division of the town the prince saw a big mansion, and just to break the silence asked his friends what that was. "That is the Rajasthanik Kacheri, a place you ought to have been sitting in for the last two years. The wretched minister, Kharavadana, has already usurped your seat; for if he had intended to give you back the kingdom he would have done it two years ago when you reached your sixteenth year. Let us now console ourselves that God has spared your life till now, notwithstanding all the awards promised to the taker of your head. Even that proclamation is dying out of the memory of the people now." So said one of his friends and ceased.

These words fell like arrows in the ear of Sundara and troubled him. The shame that he had been neglected brought a change of colour over his face which all his friends perceived, and they felt sorry for having touched upon the subject. The prince, perceiving that he had played a woman's part among his friends, resumed or pretended to resume his former cheerful countenance, and changed the conversation to some pleasanter topics. They separated very late that night. Before doing so, Sundara asked all to present themselves in the durbar hall early next morning. At the same time he also ordered Ranavirasing to keep horses ready for himself and his friends for a morning ride through the town the next day. "I was only waiting to hear such an order from your own mouth, *Mai Bab Chakravarti*; I was thinking from your retired disposition that you were not an energetic man. I will have the horses ready." Ranavirasing at once issued orders to his servants to keep ready saddled and decked twenty-one horses for the prince and his companions. He also appointed a certain number of his men to ride in front of the party.

The morning came. The friends assembled as promised the previous evening. The prince and they, after a light breakfast, mounted their horses. The horsemen rode in front and behind. The prince with his friends marched in the middle. Ranavirasing with drawn sword rode side by side with him. The party went through the four main streets of the town. Every one rose up and paid due respect to the old king's son. When passing through the street where the minister's mansion was, Ranavirasing perceived that Kharavadana paid no respect to the royal march. This seemed a most unbearable insult to Ranavirasing. He bit his lips, gnashed his teeth, and wrung his

hands. The prince observed all the mental pains of his faithful guardian, and laughed to himself at his simplicity. About midday, the party returned to the palace. The friends dispersed, and Sundara after the ceremonies of the new-moon day had a slight dinner, and retired to rest.

The morning ride was deep in the mind of the prince. Though he laughed to himself at the simplicity of Ranavirasing when the latter gnashed his teeth in the morning the insult had left a stronger and deeper impression in his heart. The day was almost spent. Sundara took a very light supper, and shut himself up in his bed-room before the first watch was quite over. Ranavirasing, as usual watched outside. The prince found his wife sound asleep in her bed, and without disturbing her he went up and down the room. A threadlike substance attracted his attention in a corner of the bed-chamber. On examination he found it to be a thread ladder. He had not even time to think how it came into the bedchamber. Just then Ranavirasing had retired for a few minutes to take his supper. "The old fool is off now to eat; and Paramesvar has thrown this ladder in my way. Let me now escape." Thus thinking Sundara came out unobserved by his old guardian, and ascended to the top of the seventh mansion. From that place he cast his ladder towards a big tree in the East Main street. On pulling it he found it tight. "Let me get down, and Paramesvar will assist me." So praying, before the first watch was over, the prince got down from his palace, and was in a few minutes in the East street. The severe watch kept over him by Ranavirasing made it very difficult for him to go out when he liked, and now by the grace of God, as he thought, he escaped that dark new-moon night.

"Life is dear to every one. What can I do if any of the minister's men find me out now and murder me? *Na daivam Sankarat param.* No god but Sankara, and he will now help me." Thus thinking he walked to the nearest pyal, and lingered there till the bustle of the town subsided. Nor was it in vain that he stopped there. He overheard while there the following conversation take place between the master and mistress of the house at which he lingered:—"Console yourself, my wife. What shall we do? Fate has so willed it on our heads. May Brahma become without a temple for the evil that he has sent us. When the old king was living he appreciated my merits, and at every Sankranti gave me due *dakshina* for my knowledge of the *Vedas*. Now there reigns a tyrant over our kingdom. I was lingering here with the hope that the son of Sivachar would one day come to the throne and relieve our sufferings. Now that such hope is altogether gone, I have made up my mind to leave this nasty city, and go to some good place where there reigns a king to appreciate our *yogyata* (merit)." Of these words Sundara overheard every syllable, and these supplied the *ghi* to the fire of shame and anger that was already burning in his mind. "Let me try to win back my kingdom. If I succeed I save lives. If I die, I die singly. May Paramesvar help me." So saying he walked out of the town, and passed the east gate. The night was as dark as could be, for it was a new-moon night. Clouds were gathering in the sky, and there were some symptoms of rain.

There was a Ganesa temple on the way. As it was already drizzling, the prince went inside till the rain should cease. No sooner had he entered it than he saw two men,

who by their conversation appeared to be shepherds, coming towards that same temple. They seemed to have been watching their flocks near an adjacent field, and had come to shelter themselves from the rain in the temple. Sundara when he saw them, trembled for his life, and crept in. The shepherds sat down on the verandah, and taking out their bags began to chew betelnut. An idle lizard began to chirp in a corner. To break the silence, one said to the other, "Well, Ramakon, I have heard that you are a great soothsayer and interpreter of bird sounds and lizard speeches. Let me know what these chits of the lizard that we heard just now mean. Tell me." Ramakon replied, "This is news which I would never have revealed at any other time. But as no fourth person is likely to be here at this time on a rainy night, let me tell you that the prince of the town is now lingering here in this temple. So the lizard says. Hence I said, 'no fourth person.' I am glad that no evil hand has yet been tempted, though such a high price has been set upon his head. The very fact that he has lived up to this time unhurt in a tiger's domain augurs well for his future prosperity." Ramakon had scarcely finished his speech when the idle lizard again made its chit, chit, and Ramakon now asked his friend, Lakshmanakon, for that was the other's name, to interpret those sounds. "This has rather a sad meaning for the prince. The Mantri and Pradhani are coming here in a few minutes (nimishas) to consult on a secret topic. So says the lizard," said Lakshmanakon to Ramakon and at once a light was discovered at a distance. "It is the minister's carriage. Let us be off. God only must save the prince." So saying they both ran away.

The feelings of the prince inside were like that of a man who was being led to the gallows. The bitterest enemy of

his life, the minister himself, was coming to that very place where he was hiding. "I foolishly accused my old guardian Ranavirasing, and now I see his good intentions. How I am to be spared from this calamity Sankara only knows." Thus thinking, he hurriedly fled to the inmost part of the temple behind the very image, and sat down there, still like a stump, without even breathing freely, lest his breath might reveal him. He had ample time there to admire the sound knowledge of the shepherds in interpreting the lizard chirps, their simplicity, their honesty and truthfulness; for had they been otherwise, they might at once have caught hold of the prince and made him over to the tiger minister. True to the interpretation of the second shepherd, a carriage stopped in front of the Ganesa temple, and there came out of it the Mantri and the Pradhani. Excepting themselves and, of course, the carriage driver and, as we know, the prince behind the Ganesa, there were no others there. Kharavadana and his subordinate chose that solitary place at the dead of night to hold secret consultations. The Mantri spoke first, and one could easily perceive from his words that he was in a fit of anger. "Why should the prince be thus allowed to ride free through my streets? Of the innumerable servants who eat our salt was there not one to cut down that impertinent head?" roared the minister. The Pradhani replied, "My king, my lord, excuse me first for the humble words that I am going to speak before your honour. We have taken up a kingdom to which we have no right. If the prince had demanded the throne two years ago, we ought rightfully to have returned it to him. He never asked, and we did not restore it. He never troubles us with demands, but lives like a poor subject of the crown in his own

quarters. Such being the case, why should we kill him? Why should we murder the only son of our old and much-respected king Sivachar? What I beg to suggest to your honour is, that we should no more trouble ourselves about his poor head." The Pradhani, as he discovered that these words were not to the taste of Kharavadana, stopped at once without proceeding further, though he had much to say upon that subject. "Vile wretch! Dare you preach morals to your superiors. You shall see the result of this before the morning dawns," bawled out the minister. The Pradhani saw that all his excellent advice was like blowing a conch in a deaf man's ears. He feared for his own life, and so at once begged a thousand pardons, and promised to bring the head of the prince within a week. And as Kharavadana wanted only that, he spared the Pradhani. They then talked on different subjects, and prepared to start.

The prince inside, behind the Ganesavigraha, was now almost stifled to death. The short breaths that he inhaled and exhaled were themselves enough to kill him. Add to that the horrible words that fell on his ears. For all that he continued to hide himself. Kharavadana and the Pradhani finished their conversation and got into the carriage. Sundara called courage to his assistance, "Sankara has saved me till now; he may so save me throughout." So thinking with himself, he boldly came out of the temple without making the least noise and sat behind the carriage and, as it rolled on, thought again with himself: "I will follow these, come what may, and find out what more plans they devise against my life."

The carriage drove on to the opposite end of the town. It passed the west gate and entered a big park outside the

town. The undaunted prince followed. In the middle of the park a fine tank was discovered. The banks looked like day, being lighted up profusely. In the midst of the tank a small island with a gaudy mansion was seen. Pillars of gold, sofas of silver and doors of diamonds made it the very *Indraloka* itself. A broad road with avenues of sweet smelling flowering trees connected the island with the bank. It was at that road that the carriage stopped. The prince, before that was reached, had got down and hid himself under the shade of a tree to see unobserved all that passed in the mansion which he had every reason to believe was the destination of the minister. Kharavadana descended from the *bandi* and sent the Pradhani home. What most astonished the prince was the absence of servants in that garden. At the entrance of the road twenty young females of the most exquisite beauty waited and conducted Kharavadana through the sweet bower to the mansion. When it was reached, the minister sat down on a most richly furnished gold couch, and ordered the females there to bring the queen. Ten females arranged themselves on each side of an ivory palanquin, and started, apparently, to bring the queen in it. "These females themselves resemble Rambha, Urvasi, etc. A woman who has the beauty to be borne on the heads of these females must, of course, be of the most unimaginable beauty in this world. Let me see her." Thus thinking, the prince Sundara anxiously waited the return of the palanquin. In a few minutes it came. A female of the most charming beauty jumped briskly out of it. The minister came running to give his helping hand to her. Horror of horrors, what sees the prince! It was his own wife, the very girl that the minister had married to him a few years before, that got down

from the palanquin. "Are my eyes deceived? Do they perform their functions aright? Let me look once more." So again and again wiping his eyes to clear them a little, the prince saw distinctly. It was his very wife herself. "Oh, I most foolishly accused that grey-headed guardian for a wicked fool, because he would not allow me liberty with my wife. I now see what he saw a long time ago. Perhaps if I had slept by her side I should have thus been brought in here by some secret way that these devils seem now to have to the inmost parts of the palace. If I had taken anything from her hands I should have died that very day. My poor old man, my Ranavirasing it is, who has saved me from all these calamities." These thoughts and a thousand more were passing through Sundara's mind when he saw his wife sitting down on the same couch with the minister. She accused him of the delay in murdering her husband, of his letting all opportunities escape during the morning ride. "Horrible! Did you, Kharavadana, marry me to such a faithful wife! Thank God and Ranavirasing that I have not fallen into her snares," thought Sundara to himself. The minister offered a thousand excuses, related to her all that had taken place between himself and the Pradhani and of what the latter had promised. Then they both retired to bed. At that moment the treacherous owl began to hoot, and one of the maid-servants, who happened to be a clever interpreter of owl-hootings revealed, to secure the favour of the minister, that the prince was lurking behind a tree in that very garden. Knowing the price set on Sundara's head even female hands flew to cut it off. All ran with torches to search the garden.

These words, of course, fell upon the ears of the prince like thunder. Before the people there began their search he

began his race, jumped over a high wall, and flew like a kite. Before the lady-racers and the minister had left their sweet road to the tank-bank, Sundara found himself in the north street of the town. The news that the prince was out that night spread like a flame from the pleasure-park outside throughout the whole town, and before long avaricious persons were searching in the streets for his valuable head. Sundara thought it dangerous to pass through the streets, and wished to hide himself in a safe place. Fortune conducted him to one. It was a ruined old choultry, where food, during the days of his father, was distributed in charity to the beggars of the town, and which was now only resorted to by them to sleep, and not to receive rice. The prince entered it, and laid himself down in the midst of them, fortunately unobserved. He could hear from where he was the noise of the persons searching outside. In the garden the minister searched in vain, and accusing the female for her wrong interpretation as he thought, retired to bed.

Outside the north gate, at a distance of three *ghatikas'* walk, lived a robber. He used to start out on a plundering expedition once in seven years. In the houses and mansions he used to rob he took only jewels of various kinds, *Gomeda*, *Pushparaga*, (topaz) *vajra*, *vaidurya*, &c.; gold and silver he rejected as being too mean for his dignity. As he was a gentleman-robber, he used to take a coolie with him on the way to carry his booty. Of course that coolie never returned from the cave. He was put to death after his services were over, lest he should disclose the secret of the robber.

Unfortunately that new-moon night happened to be the night of that cruel robber's plundering expedition. He came out, and when he saw people in search of the prince

thinking that he was not in his palace, he wanted to plunder it. Wishing a coolie he entered the ruined choultry to pick out one among the beggars there. Passing over the others he came to the prince. He found him stout and strong. "This beggar will do me good service to-day. I shall break my custom, and amply reward this man for his services." So thinking to himself, the gentleman-robber tapped Sundara with his cane on the back. The prince had just closed his eyes. In the short sleep that ensued he dreamt that the minister's servants were pursuing him, and that one had caught him. At that very moment the gentleman-robber's stroke fell upon his back, giving a sort of reality to his dream. He awoke with horror. "Tell me who you are," asked the unknown person. "A beggar," was the reply. "How does the night appear to you?" asked the robber. "As dark as dark can be," replied the prince. The robber applied a sort of *kajjala* to the prince's eyes, and asked, "How does the night appear now?" "As luminous as if a *karor* of suns were in the sky, answered Sundara. The robber applied a tilaka to the intended coolie's forehead and addressed him thus: "I am a robber, now going to plunder the palace, from which the prince is absent. Follow me. I shall reward you richly. The *kajjala* has made the night a day to you. The *kajjala* takes you unobserved wherever you wish to go." So saying, and dragging the coolie or supposed coolie by the hand the robber went off to the palace. Wherever he found a door locked he applied a leaf that he carried in his hand to the fastening, and behold the lock flew back, and the door opened of its own accord. The prince was astonished. In a few minutes the robber opened one and all of the gates and boxes, and extracted all the precious stones. He tied them up in a bundle, and set it on the prince's head, and asked him to follow. Sundara followed. He assisted

in the plunder of his own palace, carried the booty behind the robber, who, praised be his stupidity, never for one moment suspected he was a prince, but admired his coolie for the beauty of his person, thought of saving his life, and also of making him his son-in-law. For the robber had a beautiful daughter, for whom he had long been searching for a suitable husband. So with this thought he reached the cave, stopped before it, and taking the bundle from the prince's head ordered him to go into a large cell the mouth of which he covered with a big stone which he lifted up by pronouncing an incantation over it. The robber went with the bundle to his wife, and described to her the beauty of the coolie, and what a fair match he would be for their daughter. The wife did not like it, and asked her husband to do with the coolie as was usual, *i.e.*, murder him; and the robber, who, never in anything acted against the will of his wife, went in to fetch his weapon.

Meanwhile the robber's daughter, an excellent girl, of the most charming beauty, overhearing all that took place between her parents, came running to the cave where the coolie was confined. She pronounced a single word over the stone lid of the cave, and it opened, and the prince, who had lost all hopes of recovery, now beheld a beautiful girl coming towards him. "Whoever you may be, my dear coolie, fly for your life for the present. You are my husband. My father has so named you, but as my mother does not like it, he has gone to fetch his weapon to murder you. Excepting we three, none, not even Brahma, can open the once-shut gates. After hearing you once called my husband, I must ever regard you so. Now fly, and escape my father's sharp sword. If you are a man, marry

me in kind remembrance of the assistance rendered. If you fail to do so you are a beast, and I shall die a virgin." So saying she conducted out in haste the supposed coolie who had only time to take a hasty embrace, whispering in her ear that he was the prince, and that he would marry her without fail. He now ran for his life. Fearing the robber would come after him he left the way by which he reached the cave, and passing through unknown fields reached the south gate of the town. By that time the search for him had almost abated, and the prince, praising God for his delivery, reached the south street. The night was almost spent. Before returning to the palace he wished to take rest for a few minutes, till he had recovered his breath, and so he sat down on the pyal of an old and almost ruined house.

That happened to be the house of a poor Brahman, who had not even sufficient clothes to wear. As the prince sat down in a corner of the pyal the door of the house opened, and the old Brahman came out. The old woman, the Brahmani, was standing at the door with a vessel containing water for her husband. Subha Sastri, for that was the Brahman's name, looked up to the sky for a couple of minutes, after which he heaved a deep sigh, and said, "Alas, the prince, the only son of our former protector, Sivachar, is not to remain for more than two *ghatikas*. A *kalasarpa* (black serpent) will sting him. What shall we do? we are poor. If we could begin *Sarpahoma* now we could tie the mouth of the snake, sacrifice it in the fire, and thus save the prince." So saying the poor Brahman cried. Sundara, who overheard everything, jumped down in confusion, and fell at the feet of the Brahman, who asked him who he was. "I am a herdsman of the palace. Preserve my master's

life," was the reply. Subha Sastri was extremely poor. He had no means to procure a small quantity of *ghi* even to begin the *Homa*. He did not know what to do. He begged from his neighbours, who all laughed at his stupidity, and ridiculed his astrology. The prince in a hopeless state of anguish wrung his hands, and in wringing them he felt his ring. Drawing it off his finger he gave it to Subha Sastri, and requested him to pawn it. The latter resorted to the nearest bazaar, and awakening the bazar-keeper procured from him a little *ghi*, by pawning the ring. Running home and bathing in cold water the Brahman sat down for the *Homa*. The prince, fearing the serpent, wished to sit inside the house, but at a distance from the place of the ceremony. Just at the appointed hour a large black serpent broke through the sky, fell on the head of the prince, whom he was not able to bite, and gave up its life in the fire. "This is no neatherd, but the very prince himself," said the Brahmani. Sundara rose up, and running circumambulated them thrice, spoke to them thus: "You alone are my parents and protectors. This night has been a most adventurous one with me. There was every possibility of my escaping every other calamity, and so I did. But no other power except yours could have averted this snake-bite. So my rescue is due to you alone. I have no time to lose now. Before daylight I must fly unobserved to the palace, and you shall before long see my reward for this." So saying, Sundara ran to his palace, and entered.

Ranavirasing was almost dead. The rumour that the prince was out reached him. He was astonished at the way in which Sundara had got out. He searched the whole palace. To his astonishment all the rooms had previously been opened and plundered. "Has the prince

been stolen away by some vile tricks from the palace," thought Ranavirasing, and without knowing what to do he was buried in the ocean of sorrow, from which he gave up all hopes of recovering. What was his joy, then, when he saw the prince enter the palace just at dawn. "*Mai Bab Chakaravari*, where have you been the whole night throwing away the advice of your poor slave? How many enemies you have in this world, you have yet to know," said Ranavirasing. "I know them all now, only listen to what I say, and do as I bid. I have won the crown without a blow. Thank the day that gave me you as my protector, for it was only yesterday that I had ample reason to verify your statements. My adventures would make your hair stand on end. Thank god, I have escaped from all of them unhurt. If you have a few men ready now, we have won the kingdom." So saying, the prince explained to him every point of his adventure. "If we catch hold of the minister now, we have done all." "I could never for one moment think that you in a single night could have seen and done so much. Now that heaven has shown you the way, I shall obey you," said Ranavirasing, and Sundara accordingly issued the orders. He described the house with the pyal on which he had lingered for a while the previous night, and asked a servant to bring the owner of that house to the Rajasthanik office. Ranavirasing brought in the Pradhani, who was extremely delighted at the good intention of the prince. He was offered the Mantri's place. Two were sent to the shepherds. Twenty were sent to the pleasure-park to have the minister and his sweet paramour brought to the court in chains. The female servants were also ordered to be brought. The robber and his cruel wife were not forgotten. The prince

minutely described the cave, and asked his servants to catch and imprison the robber by surprising him suddenly, without giving him time to have recourse to his vile tricks—lock-breaking leaf, *kajjala*, etc. The palace palanquin was sent for the robber's daughter, whom the prince had firmly made up his mind to marry. The palace elephants were decked and sent to fetch with all pomp Subha Sastri and his wife to the court. Thus, without a single stroke, Sundara won the kingdom. Ranavirasing was thunder-struck by the excellent and bold way in which the prince in one night went through the series of calamities, and successfully overcame them all. The Pradhani's delight knew no bounds. He himself broke open the court and every one connected with the previous night's adventure was ushered in. The prince bathed, offered up his prayers, and attended the council. When Subha Sastri came in with his wife the prince put them on the *simhasana*, and himself standing before them, explained to all his previous night's adventures, rewarded the poor Brahman and the shepherds, punished by banishment the maid-servant who, knowing that the prince's head was coveted, revealed his concealment, and ordered his wife, the minister, the robber, and the robber's wife to be beheaded. He rewarded without limit his protector, Subha Sastri, and married the robber's daughter, being won over by her sincerity. The Pradhani as we have said already, he made his minister, and with his old guardian, the faithful Ranavirasing, the prince reigned for several years in the kingdom of Vanjaimanagar.

V

" CHARITY ALONE CONQUERS "

Dharmame jayam

In the town of Tevai* there lived a king called Suguna. He had an excellent minister named Dharmasila. They ruled for a long time in prosperity over the kingdom. Both of them had sons. The prince's name was Subuddhi. He was a noble prince, and quite in keeping with his name, was always bent upon good to the world. The minister's son was named Durbuddhi, a most wicked boy, whose only delight was teasing beasts and birds from his infancy, and which ripened into all sorts of wickedness as he grew to boyhood. Notwithstanding the difference between their tempers, the prince and the minister's son were the best of friends. The motto of the prince was *Dharmame jayam*—Charity alone conquers. That of the minister's son was *Adharmame jayam*—Absence of Charity alone conquers. When rising from their beds, when beginning their prayers, when sitting down for meals or study, and, in fact, before beginning to do anything, each repeated his motto. The people had great hopes in Subuddhi, whom they fully expected to see a good and benevolent king; but the minister's son all thoroughly hated. Even the minister himself, his father, hated his son for his vile turn of mind, which he found impossible to change. His only friend, as we have already said, wasthe prince, who, notwithstanding all his faults loved him sincerely. Both of them had grown up together from their very cradle, had played in the same dust, had read

* Tevai is the classical name of the modern town of Ramnad in the district of Madura.

their lessons side by side in the same school under the same teachers. Fortune so ordained that the prince's mind should take such a bent, while the mind of the minister's son turned in a crooked way.

Nor was Durbuddhi insensible to the disgust and dislike which every one manifested towards him. He was well aware of all that was going on around. Still he would not change. "I have no friend in this world excepting yourself, my dear Subuddhi," exclaimed Durbuddhi one day to his royal friend while they were riding together. "Fear nothing. I shall ever stand by you as your true friend," replied Subuddhi. "My very father hates me. Who else would like me then? On the contrary, every one likes you. You may soon get yourself married to some beautiful lady, while I must remain a bachelor; for no girl would marry me. You may soon rise to the place of a king; but I cannot become your minister, as the people do not like me. What can I do?" So said the minister's son, and hung down his head, as if conscious for a time of the utter hatred with which the people regarded him. Subuddhi replied, "Heed it not, I will make you my minister, give you everything you want and see you well provided for." "If so, will you give me your wife one day, at least, if you happen to get married before me, and if I remain a bachelor after you," were the words which the wretched Durbuddhi shamelessly uttered to the face of his only friend. These words were enough in themselves to enrage the prince's mind. But he was of so good a nature that instead of becoming angry, he smiled at the stupidity of his companion, and agreed that he would thus give him his wife one day in case he got married first.

Thus took place an agreement between Subuddhi and Durbuddhi when they were quite young.

Several years passed after this agreement, when one day the prince went to hunt in a neighbouring forest. His inseparable companion, the minister's son, and several hunters followed him to the wood. The prince and the minister's son both gave chase to a deer. They rode so much in advance of the hunters that they lost themselves in a thick jungle, where the latter could neither see nor follow them. The hunters returned after dark, and informed the king and the minister about the disappearance of their sons. They thought that as their sons were grown-up men they need not fear for their safety.

The two friends chased the deer and found themselves in the midst of a thick forest in the evening. Except a slight breakfast in the early morning they had tasted no other food. Hunger was pinching them severely. The hot chase had awakened a severe thirst, to quench which they were not able to find a drop of water. In utter hopelessness of life they resigned themselves to the course of their steeds. The beasts seemed very well to understand the wants of their royal riders. They went on trotting, and at last about midnight, stopped on the banks of a large tank.

The riders, who were almost dead with thirst, opened their closed eyes when the horses stopped. All on a sudden and to their great joy they found themselves on the banks of a large tank. Their joy knew no bounds. "Surely God takes care of His children. Had it not been for His kind care how could we have come to this tank, when we had resigned ourselves to the course of our horses?"

thought Subuddhi to himself, and got down from his horse. The minister's son, who had become more exhausted by that time than his companion, also alighted. Subuddhi, true to the nobility of his mind, took both the steeds first to water, and after satisfying their thirst and loosening them to graze by the side of a grassy meadow he went into the water to quench his thirst. The minister's son also followed. After a short prayer Subuddhi took some handfuls of water, and returned to the bank. Durbuddhi also returned. They chose a clean spot, and sat down to rest during the remaining part of the night. The prince when taking his seat pronounced his usual motto, "Charity alone conquers." And the minister's son also repeated his—"Absence of Charity alone conquers."

These words fell like venom into the ears of the prince at that time. He could not control his anger then, notwithstanding his mild disposition. The hardship of the day, their fortunate arrival on a tank in the dead of night to have their thirst quenched, were fresh in Subuddhi's mind, and the prayers that he was offering to God were not yet over. That the minister's son should never think of these, and go on with his own stupid motto even at that time became most unbearable to Subuddhi. "Vile wretch! Detested atheist! Have you no shame to utter your wicked motto even after such calamities? It is not too late even now. Mend your character. Think of the God that saved you just now. Believe in Him. Change your motto from this day." Thus spoke the angry prince to the minister's son.

Durbuddhi who was naturally of a wicked and quarrelsome temperament, flew into a rage at once at the excellent

advice of the prince. "Stop your mouth. I know as well as you do; you cannot wag your tail here. I can oppose you single-handed in this forest." Thus saying, the minister's son sprang like an enraged lion at Subuddhi, who, as he never dreamt of any such thing, was completely overpowered by the wicked Durbuddhi. The prince was thrown down in the twinkling of an eye, and the minister's son was upon him. He severely thrashed his royal master, and taking hold of a twig that was lying close by, tore out the prince's two eyes, filled up the sockets with sand, and ran away with his horse, thinking that he had completely killed him.

Subuddhi was almost dead. His body was bruised all over. His eyes were no more. His physical pain was unbearable. "Is there a God over us all?" thought Subuddhi. The night was almost over. The cool and sweet breeze of the morning gave him some strength. He rose up, and crawling on the ground, found himself by touch at the entrance of a temple. He crept in, shut the gates and fastened the bolt.

It happened to be a temple of the fierce *Kali*. She used to go out every morning to gather roots and fruits, and to return by evening. That day when she returned she found her gates shut against her. She threatened with destruction the usurper of her temple. A voice, and we know that it was Subuddhi's, replied from within, "I am already dying of the loss of my eyes. So if in anger you kill me it is so much the better; for what use is there in my living blind? If, on the contrary, you pity me, and by your divine power give me my eyes, I shall open the gates." Kali was in a very difficult position. She was very hungry, and saw

no other way of going inside than by giving Subuddhi his eyes. "Open the gates; your request is granted," said Kali. No sooner were these words uttered than the prince recovered his eyes. His delight may be better imagined than described. He opened the gates and vowed before Kali that he would from that day continue in that temple as her servant and worshipper.

The wretched Durbuddhi after his horrible act, rode on composedly, following the footsteps of his horse, and reached the forest where he was hunting the day before in company with the prince. He thence returned home all alone. When his father saw him coming back he suspected something wrong to the prince and asked his son what had become of him. "We chased a deer, and he rode so much in advance of me that he was out of sight, and finding all search vain, I returned alone," was Durbuddhi's reply. "This I would have believed from any one but yourself. Never plant your feet in these dominions till you bring back the prince again. Run for your life," was the order of the minister, and Durbuddhi accordingly ran, fearing the anger of his father.

Thus the prince Subuddhi was serving in the Kali temple; and Durbuddhi, fully confident that he had killed his friend, roamed about from place to place, as he saw no possibility of returning to his own country without the prince.

Thus passed several months. The goddess Kali was extremely delighted at the sincere devotion of Subuddhi, and, calling him one day to her side, said,—"My son! I am delighted with your great devotion to me. Enough of

your menial services here. Better return now to your kingdom. Your parents are likely to be much vexed at your loss. Go and console their minds." Thus ended Kali, and Subuddhi replied : "'Excuse me, my goddess, my mother. I no more regard them as my parents. This wood is not a large place if they wished to search for me. As they were so careless of me I shall also from this day disregard them. You are my father and mother. Therefore permit me to end my days here in your service." So saying, Subuddhi begged Kali to allow him to stay, and the goddess agreed accordingly for some time at least.

After a few more months Kali called the prince again to her and addressed him thus :—" My boy ! I have devised another plan. Better not, then, go to your parents, as you do not wish to go now. At a short distance from this place, in the Kaveri country, reigns a staunch devotee of mine. His daughter had smallpox, and as he forgot to do proper respect to me, I have blinded both her eyes. The king has issued a proclamation that he will give the whole kingdom and his daughter in marriage to him who would cure her of her defect. He has hung up a bell (*ghanta*) at which every physician who wishes to try the case strikes. The king comes running as soon as he hears the sound, takes home the doctor and shows him the case. Several persons have tried in vain ; for who could repair a defect incurred by the displeasure of the gods ? Now I mean to send you there. That king is a staunch worshipper of my feet. Though I had punished him first, still I pity the sad calamity that has come upon his daughter. You had better go there and strike the bell. He will take you and show you the case. For three consecutive days apply my

holy ashes to her eyes. Though fools may deride these ashes, still by them a true devotee can work wonders. On the fourth day her eyes will be perfectly restored. Then you will secure her hand, and what is more the country of Kaveri. Reign there, for you are born to reign, being a prince, and not to spend your time here in this wood. If you do not do so you will commit a sin, and what is more incur my displeasure." Thus ended Kali, and the prince could not refuse; for he feared the anger of the goddess. Agreeing to her words, and with her manifold blessings, he started and reached the kingdom of Kaveri.

He struck the bell. The king came running to welcome the new doctor. All the previous physicians had tried by medicines external and internal. The new doctor —prince Subuddhi—proposed to treat the case by *mantras* —incantations. The old king, who was very religious, fully believed that the new doctor might effect the cure; and just as he expected, on the fourth day his daughter's sight was completely restored. The king's joy knew no bounds. He enquired the parentage of the doctor; and when he came to know that he had princely blood in his veins, that he was as honourably descended as himself, his joy was greatly increased. He sent up a thousand prayers to the god for giving him a royal son-in-law. As promised in his notice, he would have to give his daughter to anyone, whatever he might be, who effected the cure. The lowest beggar, the lowest casteman, if he had only succeeded in curing her would have had as much claim to her hand as the prince-physician. So when the person that effected the cure proved to be a prince the king was extremely delighted, and at once made all arrangements for the marriage of his daughter and gave her to Subuddhi;

and himself being very old he gave the kingdom also to the prince at the same time.

Thus by the favour of Kali, Subuddhi had a princess for his wife and a kingdom to govern. Subuddhi, as we know, was an excellent man. Though he became king now, he consulted his father-in-law in all matters, and, in fact, acted only as the manager for the old man. Every evening he used to consult him for an hour or two before disposing of intricate cases. The duty of signing, too, he reserved for the old man. Thus even on those days when there were no cases he used to go to his father-in-law to get papers signed. Thus passed on a couple of years or so.

One evening, while sitting in company with his wife in the loftiest room of his palace after the duties of the day he cast his eyes to the east main street and contemplated the bustle of that part of the town. Carts creaking under the load of merchandise, the flourish with which the goods and wares were exposed for sale, fashionable gentlemen in their fanciful evening costumes walking to and fro, the troublesome hawkers that stand by the roadside questioning every one as to what he would buy, and several other things interested him, and for a time made him somewhat proud even that he ruled over such a rich country. But sweetness is not always unaccompanied with bitterness. He saw in that same street a man whose face was very familiar to him, but whom he could not at once make out. A black man was sitting on a projecting pyal of a corner of a shop, and was mending some torn gunny bags. Subuddhi looked at him carefully. "Is it the minister's son, Durbuddhi? No; he is not so black; rather was

not when I saw him last," thought Subuddhi with himself, and examining his face, he at last exclaimed, "It is he! It is my friend and companion." "Who is it?" exclaimed the princess, and rushed at once to his side. She had most carefully watched her husband's face for the past few minutes while he was in deep contemplation. "It is my friend, the minister's son, by name Durbuddhi. We were companions from our birth, we played in the same dust, read in the same school, and were ever inseparable companions. I do not know what has brought him to the condition in which I see him now," said Subuddhi, and sent some one to bring him. Of the wicked and base act of the vile Durbuddhi he did not care to inform his gentle wife, who now retired to her inner apartments, as decorum did not allow her to be in company with her husband when he was receiving others.

The persons sent brought in Durbuddhi. Whatever might have been the cruelty that he had received from the hands of the minister's son, the prince began to shed tears when he saw his old companion ushered in, not in that blooming cheerful red complexion in which he had seen him last, but in a weather-beaten dark skin and dejected colour of a coolie in which he saw him a few minutes ago.

"I excuse you all your faults, my dear Durbuddhi. Tell me quickly what has brought you to this wretched plight," asked Subuddhi, and while asking he began to cry aloud. The minister's son also shed tears copiously, and cried or pretended to cry; for be it known that he was a perfect scoundrel, born to no good in the world. "My own mischief has brought me to this plight. When I

returned to our country after putting out your eyes and thinking that I had killed you, my father banished me from our dominions, and ordered me never to plant my feet within their limits without bringing you back. As I thought I had put an end to your life I never came back to that tank in search of you. I engaged myself as a coolie in the streets of this town after trying with no success several other places, and I now stand before you." Thus ended Durbuddhi, and the prince quite forgot his cruelty to him. He ordered his servants to get the minister's son bathed, and attired in as rich robes as he himself wore. Then he related to him his own story, without omitting a single point, and at once made him his minister.

The whole story of Durbuddhi, excepting the single point of his having put out his eyes the prince related to his wife, father, and mother-in-law.

Thus was Durbuddhi again restored to his high position, through the liberal kindness of Subuddhi. Subuddhi did not stop even with this. He began to send him with papers and other things to the old king for signature. This went on for some months. All the while Durbuddhi was as obedient as might be, and by his vile tricks had completely won over the heart of the old king.

One evening, after the signatures were over, Durbuddhi stopped for a while as if desirous to speak. "What do you want," said the old king. "Nothing but your favour," was the only reply, after which he retired. Thus he went on practising for some days and weeks. Every day he stopped for a few minutes after the state business was over, and when the old king asked the reason for it went on

giving evasive answers. At last one evening the old king was extremely provoked. The cunning Durbuddhi had purposely intended this. "What a big fool are you to stop every day as if wishing to speak and never to utter a word," broke out the old king. "I beg pardon of your honour; I was thinking all the while whether I should let out my secret or not. At last, I have come to the conclusion that I will keep it to myself," replied the diabolical Durbuddhi. "No, you shall let it out," roared the old king, whose curiosity was more roused than abated by the words, purposely obscure, of the minister's son. Durbuddhi, after pretending much uneasiness at the disclosure of the supposed secret, loudly began his harangue, "My lord, ever since I came here I made enquiries about the nobility of your family, about the sacrifices that you and your ancestors have performed, about the purifications that you and your elders have undergone, and about a thousand other particulars, each of which is enough to secure you and your descendants the place of Achyuta (*Achyutapada*) himself. These delighted me for a time, I say for a time, for listen, please, to what follows. When I compared with the pure fame of your famous family, that of your son-in-law's my heart began to pain me. Indeed the pain which began at that moment has not yet ceased. Know, then, that your son-in-law is not a prince. No doubt he has royal blood in his veins, which makes him look like a king. How came he to be so skilful in medicine. Just enquire the cause. To be no more in the dark, the king of my country—over which my father is the minister-set out one day on *savar*. While passing a barber's street he saw a beautiful damsel of that caste. Bewitched by her beauty the king wanted to have her as his concubine,

notwithstanding her low position in society. The fruit of concubinage is your son-in-law. He being the son of a barber-mother acquired so very easily the art of medicine. That a king was his father makes him look like a prince. If he had been of pure birth why should he leave his kingdom, and come here to effect the cure of your daughter? Except this prince, or supposed prince, all those that came here were mere doctors by caste." Thus ended the vile Durbuddhi, and taking in his hand the papers, vanished out of the room quickly, like a serpent that had stung.

The sweet words in which the minister's son clothed his arguments, the rising passion at the thought that he had been falsely imposed upon by a barber's son, the shame or rather supposed shame that he thought had come over his family, and a thousand other feelings clouded for a time the clear reason of the old king. He saw no other way of putting an end to the shame than by the murder of his dear daughter and son-in-law first, and of his own self and queen afterwards. At once he ordered the executioner who came in. He gave him his signet-ring, and commanded him to break open the bed-room of his son-in-law that midnight, and murder him with his wife while asleep. The *hukums* or orders given with signet-rings ought never to be disobeyed. The executioner humbled himself to the ground as a sign of his accepting the order, and retired to sharpen his knife for his terrible duty.

Neither Subuddhi nor his affectionate wife had any reason to suspect this terrible order. The old queen and the treacherous Durbuddhi had equally no reason to know anything about it. The old man, after issuing the *hukum* shut himself in his closet, and began to weep and wail as if

he had lost his daughter from that moment. Durbuddhi, after kindling the fire, as says the Tamil proverb, by means of his treachery, came back with the papers to the prince. A thought occurred in his mind that Subuddhi's fate was drawing near. He wanted to have fulfilled the engagement that took place between himself and the prince about the loan for a day of the latter's wife for his beastly enjoyment. The excellent Subuddhi who always observed oaths most strictly was confused for a time. He did not know what to do. To stick to the oath and surrender his wife to another; or to break it and preserve the chastity of his own wife. At last, repeating in his own mind, "Charity alone conquers," and also thinking that heaven would somehow devise to preserve his wife's purity he went to her, explained to her how the matter stood, and ordered her to sleep with the minister's son that night in his own bed-chamber. She hesitatingly consented; for as a good wife she could not disobey her husband's commands. Subuddhi then told Durbuddhi that he might sleep in his bed-room that night, and have his wife as his companion.

The princess went to her mother crying that her husband had turned out mad. "Or else who would promise to give his wife to another for a night. He has ordered me to sleep this night with the minister's son. What does he mean by that?" "My daughter! Fear nothing, perhaps in his boyhood, without knowing what the delicate duties of a wife are, he agreed to present you as a toy to the use of another for a night. The promise once made now pains him. Unable to break it, and leaving it to yourself to preserve your chastity, he has so ordered you. And he would, nay must, excuse you, if you by some means or

other save yourself, and apparently make good your husband's promise also. A thought just comes to me how to do that. There is your foster-sister exactly resembling you. I shall send her in your place, ordering her to behave like yourself in your bed-room." So consoling her daughter, the old queen at once made all the requisite arrangements. And, of course, Subuddhi had no reason then to know anything about them.

The night came on and the minister's son went to the prince's bed-room and slept with the supposed wife of his friend, with his lovely motto, "*Adharmame jayam,*" but he was soon to learn that *Adharmam* never conquers. For at midnight, just a few minutes after he had thought that his *Adharmam* had fully conquered, the door is forced open, and a ruffian with a drawn sword blazing like lightning rushes in, and murders the pair. Thus in that very night in which Durbuddhi had reached the topmost point of his vice he was cut down by the supreme hand of God. For, it is said, that when crime increases, God himself cannot bear.

The morning dawned, Subuddhi rose from his couch, and after his morning prayers was sitting in the council hall. The princess, and her mother rose from their beds, and were after their business. A servant just at that time came running to the old queen, and said, "Our king is weeping in his room that his daughter is now no more. I think that there is something wrong with his majesty's brains to-day. Come and console him." The queen, who knew nothing of what had happened, ran to her husband's room quite astonished at the change. The husband reported everything to her, the sage-looking minister's son, the barber son-in-law, and everything, and then concluded

that their daughter and son-in-law were no more. "What! compose yourself. Our son-in-law is sitting in his durbar. Our daughter is just adorning herself in her dressing-room. Were you dreaming? Are you in your right senses?" said the queen. The king ordered the executioner to bring the heads, which, on examination, proved to be those of the minister's son and of the foster-sister. The queen told everything of the one-day-wife-giving engagement, and her own arrangements about it. The old king could not understand what all this meant. He drew out his sword and ran to the durbar like a maddened lion, and stood armed before his son-in-law, "Relate to me your true origin, and everything respecting yourself. Speak the truth. How came you to learn medicine? If you are a prince why should you leave your own dominions and come down here? What about the beastly agreement of giving your wife to another? Who is this minister's son?" Subuddhi, without omitting a single point, related everything that had taken place, even to the putting out of his eyes. The old man threw down his sword, took his son-in-law in his arms almost, for so great was his joy at the excellent way which fate had prepared for his escape, and said, "My son, my life, my eye. True it is, true it is. *Dharma* alone conquers, and you that hold that motto have conquered everything. The vile wretch whom notwithstanding the series of rogueries that he practised upon you, you protected, has at last found out that his *Adharmam* never conquers. But he never found it out. It was his *Adharmam* that cut him off on the very night of his supposed complete conquest by it."

Letters were sent at once to Tevai, inviting Suguna and Dharmasila to the happy rejoicings for the prince and

princess's delivery, and a re-marriage was celebrated with all pomp in honour of their lucky escape. Dharmasila, as he disliked his son, never shed a single tear for his loss. Subuddhi lived for a long time, giving much consolation to his own and his wife's parents. Through the blessings of Kali they had several intelligent sons.

VI

VIDAMUNDAN KODAMUNDAN

Mr. Won't-Give and Mr. Won't-Leave

In a certain town there lived a clever old Brahman, named Won't-Give.[1] He used to go out daily and to beg in all the houses round, under the pretence that he had to feed several Brahmans in his own house. Good people, that believed in his words, used to give him much rice and curry stuffs, with which he would come home, and explain to his wife how he had deceived such and such a gentleman by the imposition of feeding in charity many persons at home. But if any hungry Brahman, who had heard of his empty boast of feeding Brahmans at home, came to him, he was sent away with some excuse or other. In this way Mr. Won't-Give brought home a basketful of rice and other necessaries every day of which he only used a small portion for himself and his wife, and converted the remainder into money. And thus by imposition and tricks he managed to live well for several years.

In an adjoining village there lived another very clever Brahman, named Won't-Leave.[2] Whenever he found any man reluctant and unwilling to give him anything that he begged of him, he would persist in bothering him until he had wrung from him a dole. This Mr. Won't-Leave, hearing of the charity of Mr. Won't-Give and his benevolent feeding of Brahmans, came to see him one day and requested him to give him a meal. Mr. Won't-Give told him that for that day ten Brahmans had already been settled, and that if he came the next day he would have his meal with-

1 *Kodamundan.* 2 *Vidamundan.*

out fail. Mr. Won't-Leave agreed to this, and left him for that day. Mr. Won't-Give had, of course, told him the very lie he was accustomed to tell all that occasionally begged meals of him.

Now Mr. Won't-Leave was not so stupid as to be thus imposed upon. He stood before Mr. Won't-Give's door precisely at the appointed *ghatika* (hour) the next day and reminded the master of the house of his promise. Mr. Won't-Give had never before been taken at his word, and determined to send away the impertinent guest by some stronger excuse than the first, and so he spoke to him thus :—" Sir, I am very sorry to say that my wife fell ill last night of a strong fever, from which she has not yet recovered. Owing to this unforeseen accident I have had to postpone my charitable feedings (*samaradhana*) till her recovery, so do not trouble me please for some days more."

Mr. Won't-Leave heard these words with an expression of sincere, or rather seemingly sincere, sorrow in his face, and replied:—" Respected Sir, I am very sorry for the illness of the mistress of the house, but to give up charitable feeding of Brahmans on that account is a great sin. For the last ten years I have been studying the art of cooking, and can now cook for even several hundreds of Brahmans; so I can assist you now in preparing the necessaries for the *samaradhana*." Mr. Wont-Give could not refuse such a request, but he deceitfully determined in his mind to get Mr. Won't-Leave to cook for him, and then to drive him away without giving him his rice. And so he said:—" Yes, that is a very good idea. I am much obliged to you for your kind suggestion. Come in. Let us cook together." So saying the master of the

house took Mr. Won't-Leave inside and they both went into the kitchen, while the mistress of the house, at the command of her husband, pretended illness.

Now Mr. Won't-Give was a good liver, and prepared with the assistance of Mr. Won't-Leave several good dishes. And then the difficulty was to drive the fellow out, for the long-maintained rule of never feeding a single Brahman must not be broken that day. So when the cooking was all over the master of the house gave to Mr. Won't-Leave a *kasu* (copper coin) and asked him to bring some leaves from the *bazar* (for plates), and he accordingly went. Mr. Won't-Give meanwhile came to his wife and instructed her thus:—My dearest wife, I have spared you the trouble of cooking to-day. Would that we could get such stupid fools as this every day to cook for us! I have now sent him out to fetch us some leaves, and it won't look well if we shut our doors against him, or drive him away: so we must make him go away of his own accord. A thought has just come into my mind as to how we can do it. As soon as he comes you should commence to quarrel with me. I shall then come to you and beat you, or rather the ground near you with both my hands and you must continue your abuse and cries. The guest will find this very disgusting, and will leave us of his own accord." Mr. Won't-Give had just finished his instructions when he saw Mr. Won't-Leave returning with the leaves.

The wife, as prearranged, abused her husband right and left for his great imprudence and over-liberality in feeding the Brahmans. Said she: "How are we to get on in the world if you thus empty the house of everything

we have in feeding big-bellied Brahmans ? Must you be so very strict in inviting them, even when I am sick ?" These and a thousand similar expressions were now launched at the husband's head. He pretended not to hear it for a time, but at last, apparently overcome by anger, he went in and with his hands gave successive blows on the floor. At every blow on the floor the wife cried out that she was being murdered, and that those who had mercy in their hearts should come to her rescue.

Mr. Won't-Leave from the court-yard of the house listened to what was taking place inside, but not wishing to interfere in a quarrel between husband and wife, left matters to take their own course, and got into the loft, where he hid himself, fearing that he would be summoned as a witness to the quarrel.

After a time Mr. Won't-Give came out of the room where he had been beating the floor, and to his joy he could not find the guest. He cautiously looked round him and saw no signs of Mr. Won't-Leave. Of course, having had no reason to think that his guest would be sitting in the loft, he did not look up there, and even if he had done so, he would not have found him, for he had hidden himself out of sight.

Mr. Won't-Give now carefully bolted the door and his wife came out and changed her dirty cloth for a clean one. Said her husband to her : "At last we have succeeded in driving him out, come, you too must be hungry ; let us have our dinner together." Two leaves were spread on the ground and all the dishes were equally divided into them. Meanwhile Mr. Won't-Leave was examining all

that took place below him and, being himself very hungry was slyly watching for an opportunity to jump down. Mr. Won't-Give, gloating over his trickery, said to his wife: "Well, my love, did I not beat you without hurting you?" to which she replied: "Did I not continue to cry without shedding tears?" when suddenly there fell on their ears, "And did I not come to have my dinner without going away?" and down jumped Mr. Won't-Leave from the loft, and took his seat in front of the leaf spread by Mr. Won't-Give for his wife. And Mr. Won't-Give, though disappointed, was highly pleased at the cleverness of his guest.

This story is cited as the authority for three proverbs that have come into use in Tamil:

"Novamal aditten."
"Oyamal aluden."
"Pokamal vanden."

which represent the exchanges of politeness between the husband, the wife, and the guest, quoted in the foregoing paragraphs.

VII

VAYALVALLAN KAIYALVALLAN

Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth and Mr. Mighty of-his-hands

In two adjoining villages there lived two famous men. The one was called Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth[1]—one that could accomplish wonders with words alone. The other was called Mr. Mighty-of-his-hands[2]—one who could make no use of that glib instrument the tongue, but was able to bear burdens, cut wood, and perform other physical labour.

It so happened that they agreed to live together in the house of the Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth, to try and see which of them was the superior. They accordingly kept company for several months, till the great feast of the nine nights (*navaratri*) came on. On the first day of the feast Mr. Mighty-of-his-hands wanted to sacrifice a goat to the goddess Kali. So he said to Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth, "My dear friend, we both are mighty in our way, and so it would be shameful for us to buy the goat that we want to sacrifice with money. We should manage to get it without payment." "Yes, we must do so, and I know how," replied Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth, and he asked his friend to wait till that evening.

Now there lived a shepherd at one *ghatika's* (hour's) distance from their house, and the two friends resolved to go to his fold that night and steal away one of his goats. Accordingly when it was dark they approached his fold. The shepherd had just finished his duties to the mute members of his flock, and wanted to go home and have his rice

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[1] *Vayalvallon.* [2] *Kaiyalvallan.*

hot. But he had no second person to watch the flock, and he must not lose his supper. So he planted his crook before the fold, and throwing his blanket (*kambali*) over it, thus addressed it: "My son, I am very hungry, and so must go for my rice. Till I return do you watch the flock. This wood is rich in tigers and goblins (*bhutas*). Some mischievous thief or *bhuta*—or *kuta*[3] may come to steal away the sheep. Watch over them carefully. So saying the shepherd went away.

The friends had heard what the shepherd said. Of course, Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth laughed within himself at this device of the shepherd to impress upon would-be robbers that he had left some one there to watch his sheep, while really he had only planted a pole and thrown a blanket over it. Mr. Mighty-of-his-hands, however, did not see the trick, and mistaking the stick to be an actual watchman sitting at his duty before the fold, spoke thus to his friend, "Now what are we to do? There is a watchman sitting in front of the fold. Thereon Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth cleared away his doubts by saying that it was no watchman, but a mere stick, and entered the fold with his friend.

It had also so happened that on that very night a *bhuta* (goblin) had come into the fold to steal away a sheep. It shuddered with fear on hearing the shepherd mention the *kuta*, for having never heard of the existence of *kutas*, it mistook this imaginary being to be something superior in strength to itself. So thinking that a *kuta*,

[3] There is no such word as *kuta* in Tamil. The Tamil and other Dravidian languages allow rhyming repetitions of a word, like this—*bhuta-kuta*.

might come to the fold, and not wishing to expose itself till it knew well what *kutas* were, the *bhuta* transformed itself into a sheep and laid itself down among the flock. By this time the two Mighties had entered the fold and begun an examination of the sheep. They went on rejecting one animal after another for some defect or other, till at last they came to the sheep which was none other than the *bhuta*. They tested it and when they found it very heavy—as, of course, it would be with the soul of the *bhuta* in it,—they began to tie up its legs to carry it home. When hands began to shake it the *bhuta* mistook the Mighties for the *kutas*, and said to itself :— " Alas! the *kutas* have come to take me away. What am I to do ? What a fool I was to come into the fold !" So thought the *bhuta* as Mr. Mighty-of-his-hands was carrying it away on his head, with his friend following him behind. But the *bhuta* soon began to work its devilish powers to extricate itself, and Mr. Mighty-of-his-hands began to feel pains all over his body and said to his friend : " My dear Mighty, I feel pains all over me. I think what we have brought is no sheep !" Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth was inwardly alarmed at the words of his friend, but did not like to show that he was afraid. So he said, "Then put down the sheep, and let us tear open its belly, so that we shall each have only one-half of it to carry." This frightened the *bhuta*, and he melted away on the head of Mr. Mighty-of-his-hands, who, relieved of his devilish burden, was glad to return home safe with his friend.

The *bhuta* too went to its abode and there told its fellow-goblins how it had involved itself in a great trouble and how narrowly it had escaped. They all laughed at its stupidity and said, " What a great fool you are ! They

were no *kutas*. In fact there are no *kutas* in the world. They were men, and it was most stupid of you to have got yourself into their hands. Are you not ashamed to make such a fuss about your escape ?" The injured *bhuta* retorted that they would not have made such remarks had they seen the *kutas*. "Then show us these *kutas* as you choose to call them," said they, "and we will crush them in the twinkling of an eye." "Agreed," said the injured *bhuta*, and the next night it took them to the house of the Mighties, and said from a distance: "There is their house. I cannot approach it. Do whatever you like." The other *bhutas* were amazed at the fear of their timid brother, and resolved among themselves to put an end to the enemies of even one of their caste. So they went in a great crowd to the house of the Mighties. Some stood outside the house, to see that none of the inmates escaped, and some watched in the back-yard, while a score of them jumped over the walls and entered the court-yard.

Mr. Mighty-of-his-hands was sleeping in the verandah, adjoining the court-yard, and when he heard the noise of people jumping, he opened his eyes, and to his terror saw some *bhutas* in the court. Without opening his mouth he quietly rolled himself along the ground, and went to the room where Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth was sleeping with his wife and children. Tapping gently at the door he awoke his friend and said, "What shall we do now ? The *bhutas* have invaded our house, and will soon kill us." Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth told him quietly not to be afraid, but to go and sleep in his original place, and that he himself would make the *bhutas* run away. Mr. Mighty-of-his-hands did not understand what his friend meant, but not wishing to contradict his instructions rolled his way back

to his original place and pretended to sleep, though his heart was beating terribly with fright. Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth now awoke his wife, and instructed her thus: "My dearest wife, the foolish *bhutas* have invaded our house, but if you act according to my advice we are safe, and the goblins will depart harmlessly. What I want you to do is to go to the hall and light a lamp, spread leaves on the floor, and then pretend to awake me for my supper. I shall get up and enquire what you have ready to give me to eat. You will then reply that you have only pepper water and vegetables. With an angry face I shall say, 'What have you done with the three *bhutas* that our son caught hold of on his way while returning from school?' Your reply must be, 'The rogue wanted some sweetmeats on coming home. Unfortunatety, I had none in the house, so he roasted the three *bhutas* and gobbled them up.'" Thus instructing his wife Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth pretended to go to sleep.

The wife accordingly spread the leaves and called the husband for his supper. During the conversation that followed, the fact that the son had roasted three goblins for sweetmeats was conveyed to the *bhutas*. They shuddered at the son's extraordinary ability, and thought, "What must the father do for his meals when a son roasts three *bhutas* for sweetmeats?' So they at once took to their heels. Then going to the brother they had jeered at, they said to him that indeed the *kutas* were their greatest enemies, and that none of their lives were safe while they remained where they were, as on that very evening the son of a *kuta* had roasted three of them for sweetmeats. They therefore all resolved to fly away to the adjoining forest, and disappeared accordingly. Thus Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth

saved himself and his friend on two occasions from the *bhutas*.

The friends after this went out one day to an adjoining village and were returning home rather late in the evening. Darkness came on them before half the way was traversed, and there lay before them a dense wood infested by beasts of prey: so they resolved to spend the night in a high tree and go home next morning, and accordingly got up into a big *pipal*. Now this was the very wood into which the *bhutas* had migrated, and at midnight they all came down with torches to catch jackals and other animals to feast upon. The fear of Mr. Mighty-of-his-hands may be more imagined than described. The dreaded *bhutas* were at the foot of the very tree in which he had taken up his abode for the night! His hands trembled. His body shook. He lost his hold, and down he came with a horrible rustling of leaves. His friend, however, was, as usual, ready with a device, and bawled out, "I wished to leave these poor beings to their own revelry. But you are hungry and must needs jump down to catch some of them. Do not fail to lay your hands on the stoutest *bhuta*." The goblins heard the voice which was already very familiar to their ears, for was it not the *kuta* whose son had roasted up three *bhutas* for sweetmeats that spoke? So they ran away at once, crying out, "Alas, what misery! Our bitter enemies have followed us even to this wood!" Thus the wit of Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth saved himself and his friend for the third time.

The sun began to rise, and Mr. Mighty-of-his-hands thrice walked round Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth and said, "My dear friend, truly you only of us two are mighty.

Mere physical strength is of no use without skill in words. The latter is far superior to the former, and if a man possess both, he is, as it were, a golden lotus having a sweet scent. It is enough for me now to have arrived at this moral! With your kind permission I shall return to my village." Mr. Mighty-of-his-mouth asked his friend not to consider himself under any obligation, and, after honouring him as became his position he let him return to his village.

The moral of this short story is that in man there is nothing great but mind.

VIII

THE MOTHER-IN-LAW BECAME AN ASS

Little by little the mother-in-law became an as—*vara-vara mami kaludai pol anal*, is a proverb among the Tamils, applied to those who day by day go downwards in their progress in study, position, or life, and based on the following story:—

In a certain village there lived a Brahman with his wife, mother, and mother-in-law. He was a very good man, and equally kind to all of them. His mother complained of nothing from his hands, but his wife was a very bad-tempered woman, and always troubled her mother-in-law by keeping her engaged in this work or that throughout the day, and giving her very little food in the evening. Owing to this the poor Brahman's mother was almost dying of misery. On the other hand, her own mother received very kind treatment, of course, at her daughter's hands, by whom the husband was so completely ruled over, that he had no strength of mind to oppose her ill-treatment of his mother.

One evening, just before sunset, the wife abused her mother-in-law with such fury, that the latter had to fly away to escape a thrashing. Much vexed at her unhappiness she ran out of the village, but the sun had begun to set, and the darkness of night was fast overtaking her. So finding a ruined temple she entered it to pass the night there. It happened to be the abode of the village Kali (goddess), who used to come out every night at midnight to inspect her village. That night she perceived a woman —the mother of the poor Brahman—lurking within her

prakaras (boundaries), and being a most benevolent Kali called out to her, and asked her what made her so miserable that she should leave her home on such a dark night. The old Brahmani told her story in a few words, and while she was speaking the cunning goddess was using her supernatural powers to see whether all she said was true or not, and finding it to be the truth she thus replied in very soothing tones:—"I pity your misery, mother, because your daughter-in-law troubles and vexes you thus when you have become old, and have no strength in your body. Now take this mango," and taking a ripe one from out of her hips she gave it to the old Brahmani with a similing face—"eat it, and you will soon turn out a young woman like your own daughter-in-law and then she shall no longer trouble you." Thus consoling the afflicted old woman the kind-hearted Kali went away. The Brahmani lingered for the remainder of the night in the temple, and being a fond mother she did not like to eat the whole of the mango without giving a portion of it to her son.

Meanwhile, when her son returned home in the evening he found his mother absent, but his wife explained the matter to him, so as to throw the blame on the old woman, as she always did. As it was dark he had no chance of going out to search for her, so he waited for the day-light, and as soon as he saw the dawn started to look for his mother. He had not walked far when to his joy he found her in the temple of Kali.

"How did you pass the cold night my dearest mother?" said he. "What did you have for dinner ? Wretch that I am to have got myself married to a cur. Forget all her faults, and return home."

His mother shed tears of joy and sorrow, and related her previous night's adventure, whereon he said:—

"Delay not even one *nimisha* (minute), but eat this fruit at once. I do not want any of it. Only if you become young and strong enough to stand that nasty cur's troubles, well and good."

So the mother ate up the divine fruit, and the son took her upon his shoulders and brought her home, on reaching which he placed her on the ground, when to his joy she was no longer and old woman, but a young girl of sixteen, and stronger than his own wife. The troublesome wife was now totally put down, and was powerless against so strong a mother-in-law.

She did not at all like the change, and having to give up her habits of bullying, and so she argued to herself thus—"This jade of a mother-in-law became young through the fruit of the Kali, why should not my mother also do the same, if I instruct her and send her to the same temple." So she instructed her mother as to the story she ought to give to the goddess and sent her there. Her old mother, agreeably to her daughter's injunctions went to the temple, and on meeting with the goddess at midnight gave a false answer that she was being greatly ill-treated by her daughter-in-law, though, in truth, she had nothing of the kind to complain of. The goddess perceived the lie through her divine powers, but apparently seeming to pity her, gave her also a fruit. Her daughter had instructed her not to eat it till next morning and till she saw her son-in-law.

As soon as morning apprcached the poor henpecked Brahman was ordered by his wife to go to the temple and

fetch his mother-in-law as he had some time back fetched away his mother. He accordingly went, and invited her to come home. She wanted him to eat part of the fruit, as she had been instructed, but he refused, and so she swallowed it all, fully expecting to become young again on reaching home. Meanwhile her son-in-law took her on his shoulders and returned home, expecting, as his former experience had taught him, to see his mother-in-law also become a young woman. Anxiety to see how the change came on overcame him and at half way he turned his head and found such part of the burden on his shoulders as he could see to be like parts of an ass, but he took this to be a mere preliminary stage towards youthful womanhood! Again he turned, and again he saw the same thing several times, and the more he looked the more his burden became like an ass, till at last when he reached home his burden jumped down braying like an ass and ran away.

Thus the Kali, perceiving the evil intentions of the wife, disappointed her by turning her mother into an ass but no one knew of it till she actually jumped down from the shoulders of her son-in-law.

This story is always cited as the explanation of the proverb quoted above—*varavara mami kaludai pol anal*—little by little the mother-in-law became an ass, to which is also commonly added *ur varumbodu ulaiyida talaippattal*—and as she approached the village she began to bray.

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IX

THE STORY OF APPAYYA

In a remote village there lived a poor Brahman and his wife. Though several years of their wedded life has passed they unfortunately had no children ; and so being very eager for a child, and having no hope of one by his first wife, the poor Brahman made up his mind to marry a second. His wife would not permit it for some time, but finding her husband resolved, she gave way thinking within herself that she would manage somehow to do away with the second wife. As soon as he had got her consent the Brahman arranged for his second marriage and wedded a beautiful Brahman girl. She went to live with him in the same house with the first wife, who, thinking that she would be making the world suspicious if she did anything suddenly, waited for some time.

Isvara himself seemed to favour the new marriage and the second wife, a year after her wedding, becoming, pregnant, went in the sixth month of her pregnancy to her mother's house for her confinement. Her husband bore his separation from her patiently for a fortnight, but after this the desire to see her again began to prey upon his mind, and he was always asking his first wife as to when he ought to go to her. She seemed to sympathise fully with his trouble and said :

"My dearest husband, your health is being daily injured. and I am glad that your love for her has not made

it worse than it is. To-morrow you must start on a visit to her. It is said that we should not go empty-handed to children, a king, or a pregnant woman: so I shall give you one hundred *apupa* cakes, packed up separately in a vessel, which you must give to her. You are very fond of *apupas*, and I fear that you will eat some of them on the way: but you had better not do so. And I will give you some cakes packed in a cloth separately for you to eat on your journey."

So the first wife spent the whole night in preparing the *apupa* cakes, and mixed poison in the sugar and rice-flour of those she made for her co-wife and rival; but as she entertained no enmity against her husband the *apupa* cakes for him were properly prepared. By the time the morning dawned she had packed up the hundred *apupas* in a brass vessel, which could be easily carried on a man's head.

After a light breakfast—for a heavy one is always bad before a journey on foot—the Brahman placed the brass vessel on his head, and holding in his hand the kerchief containing the food for himself on the way started for the village of his second wife, which happened to be at a distance of two days' journey. He walked in hot haste till evening approached, and when the darkness of night overtook him, the rapidity of his walk had exhausted him, and he felt very hungry. He espied a wayside shed and a tank near his path, and entered the water to perform his evening ablution to the god of the day, who was fast going down below the horizon. As soon as this was over he untied his kerchief, and did full justice to its contents by

swallowing every cake whole. He then drank some water and, being quite overcome by fatigue, fell into a deep slumber in the shed, with his brass vessel and its sweet, or rather poisonous, contents under his head.

Close by the spot where the Brahman slept there reigned a famous king who had a very beautiful daughter. Several persons demanded her hand in marriage, among whom was a robber chieftain, who wanted her for his only son. Though the king liked the boy for his beauty, the thought that he was only a robber for all that prevented him from making up his mind to give his daughter in marriage to him. The robber-lord, however, was determined to have his own way, and accordingly despatched one hundred of his band to fetch away the princess in the night without her knowledge while she was sleeping to his palace in the woods. In obedience to their chieftain's order the robbers, on the night the Brahman happened to sleep in the shed, entered the king's palace and stole away the princess, together with the cot on which she was sleeping. On reaching the shed the hundred robbers found themselves very thirsty—for being awake at midnight always brings on thirst. So they placed the cot on the ground and were entering the water to quench their thirst. Just then they smelt the *apupa* cakes, which, for all that they contained poison, had a very sweet savour. The robbers searched about the shed, and found the Brahman sleeping on one side, and the brass vessel lying at a distance from him, for he had pushed it from underneath his head when he had stretched himself in his sleep. They opened the vessel and to their joy found in it exactly one hundred *apupa* cakes.

"We have one here for each of us, and that is something better than mere water. Let us each eat before we go into it," said the leader of the gang, and at once each man swallowed greedily what he had in his hand, and immediately all fell down dead. Lucky it was that no one knew of the old Brahmani's trick. Had the robbers any reason to suspect it they would never have eaten the cakes. Had the Brahman known it he would never have brought them with him for his dear second wife. Lucky was it for the poor old Brahman and his second wife, and lucky was it for the sleeping princess, that these cakes went, after all, into the stomachs of the villainous robbers!

After sleeping his fill the Brahman, who had been dreaming of his second wife all night, awoke in haste to pursue the remainder of his journey to her house. He could not find his brass vessel, but near the place where he had left it he found several men of the woods, whom he knew very well by their appearance to be robbers, as he thought, sleeping. Angered at the loss of his vessel he took up a sword from one of the dead robbers and cut off all their heads, thinking all the while that he was killing one hundred living robbers, who were sleeping after having eaten all his cakes. Presently the princess's cot fell under his gaze, and he approached it and found on it a most beautiful lady fast asleep. Being an intelligent man he perceived that the persons whose heads he had cut off, must have been some thieves, or other wicked men, who had carried her off. He was not long in doubt, for not far off he saw an army marching up rapidly with a king at its head, who was saying, "Down with the robber who has stolen away my daughter." The Brahman at once

inferred that this must be the father of the sleeping princess, and suddenly waking her up from her sleep spoke thus to her :—

"Behold before you the hundred robbers that brought you here a few hours ago from your palace. I fought one and all of them single-handed and have killed them all."

The princess was highly pleased at what she heard, for she knew of all the tricks the robbers had previously played to carry her off. So she fell reverently at the Brahman's feet and said :

"Friend, never till now have I heard of a warrior who single-handed fought one hundred robbers. Your valour is unparalleled. I *will* be your wife, if only in remembrance of your having saved me from falling into the hands of these ruffians."

Her father with his army was now near the shed, for he had all along watched the conduct of the robber chieftain, and as soon as the maid servants of the palace informed him of the disappearance of the princess and her cot, he marched straight with his soldiers for the woods. His joy, when he saw his daughter safe, knew no bounds, and he flew into his daughter's arms, while she pointed to the Brahman as her preserver. The king now put a thousand questions to our hero, who, being well versed in matters of fighting, gave sound replies, and so came successfully out of his first adventure. The king, astonished at his valour, took him to his palace, and rewarded him with the hand of the princess. And the robber chieftain, fearing the new son-in-law who single-handed had killed a hundred of his robbers, never troubled himself about the princess. Thus

the Brahman's first adventure ended in making him son-in-law to a king!

Now there lived a lioness in a wood near the princess's country, who had a great taste for human flesh, and so once a week the king used to send a man into the wood to serve as her prey. All the people now collected together before the king and said :—

"Most honoured king, while you have a son-in-law who killed one hundred robbers with his sword, why should you continue to send a man into the wood every week. We request you to send your son-in-law next week to the wood and have the lioness killed."

This seemed most reasonable to the king, who called for his son-in-law and sent him armed to the teeth into the wood.

Now our Brahman could not refuse to go for fear of losing the fame of his former exploit, and hoping that fortune would favour him, he asked his father-in-law to have him hoisted up into a big banyan tree with all kinds of weapons, and this was done. The appointed time for the lioness to eat her prey approached, and as she saw no one coming for her, and as sometimes those that had to come used to linger for a short time in the tree in which the Brahman had taken refuge, she went up to it to see that no such trick has been played upon her this time. This made the Brahman tremble so violently that he dropped the sword he held in his hand. At that very moment the lioness happened to yawn and the sword dropped right into her jaws and killed her. As

soon as the Brahman saw the course which the events had taken, he came down from the tree and invented a thousand stories of how he had given battle to the terrible lioness and overcome her. This exploit fully established his valour, and feasts and rejoicings in honour of it followed, and the whole country round blessed the son-in-law of their king.

Near this kingdom there also reigned a powerful emperor, who levied tribute from all the surrounding countries. To this emperor the father-in-law of our most valorous Brahman, who, at one stroke, had killed one hundred robbers and at another, a fierce lioness, had also to pay a certain amount of tribute ; but trusting to the power of his son-in-law, he stopped the tribute to the emperor, who, by the way, was named Appayya Raja, and who, as soon as the tribute was stopped, invaded his dominions and his father-in-law besought the Brahman for assistance.

Again the poor Brahman could not refuse ; for if he did all his former fame would be lost. So he determined to undertake this adventure also, and to trust to fortune rather than give up the attempt. He asked for the best horse and the sharpest sword and set out to fight the enemy, who had already encamped on the other side of the river, which flowed at a short distance to the east of the town.

Now the king had a very unruly horse, which had never been broken in, and this he gave his son-in-law ; and, supplying him with a sharp sword, asked him to start. The Brahman then asked the king's servants to tie

him up with cotton strings tight on to the saddle, and set out on the expedition.

The horse, having never till then felt a man on its back, began to gallop most furiously, and flew onwards so fast that all who saw it thought the rider must lose his life, and he too was almost dead with fear. He tried his best to curb his steed, but the more he pulled the faster it galloped, till giving up all hopes of life he let it take its course. It jumped into the water and swam across to the other side of the river, wetting the cotton cords by which the Brahman was tied down to the saddle, making them swell and giving him the most excruciating pain. He bore it, however, with all the patience imaginable. Presently the horse reached the other side of the river, where there was a big palmyra tree, which a recent flood had left almost uprooted and ready to fall at the slightest touch. The Brahman, unable to stop the course of the horse, held fast on to the tree, hoping thus to check its wild career. But unfortunately for him the tree gave way, and the steed galloped on so furiously that he did not know which was the safer—to leave the tree or to hold on to it. Meanwhile the wet cotton cords hurt him so that he, in the hopelessness of despair, bawled out *appa! ayya!*[1] On went his steed, and still he held on to the palmyra tree. Though now fighting for his own life, the people that were watching him from a great distance thought him to be flying to the battlefield armed with a palmyra tree! The cry of lamentation *appa ayya*, which he uttered, his enemy mistook for a challenge because, as we know, his

1 Which in Tamil are exclamations of lamentation, meaning, Ah! Alas!

name happened to be Appayya. Horror-struck at the sight of a warrior armed with a huge tree, his enemy turned and fled. *Yatha raja tatha prajah*—"As is the king so are the subjects,"—and accordingly his followers also fled. The Brahman warrior (!) seeing the fortunate course events had again taken pursued the enemy, or rather let his courser have its own furious way. Thus the enemy and his vast army melted away in the twinkling of an eye and the horse, too, when it became exhausted, returned towards the palace.

The old king had been watching from the loftiest rooms of his palace all that had passed on the other side of the river, and believing his son-in-law had, by his own prowess, driven out the enemy, approached him with all pomp. Eager hands quickly cut the knots by which the victorious (!) Brahman had been held tight in his saddle, and his old father-in-law with tears of joy embraced him and congratulated him on his victory, saying that the whole kingdom was indebted to him. A splendid triumphal march was conducted, in which the eyes of the whole town were directed towards our victorious hero.

Thus, on three different occasions, and in three different adventures, fortune favoured the poor Brahman and brought him fame. He then sent for his two former wives and took them into his palace. His second wife, who was pregnant when he first, started with the *apupa* cakes to see her, had given birth to male child, who was, when she came back to him, more than a year old. The first wife confessed to her husband her sin of having given him poisoned cakes and craved his pardon ; and it was only now that he came

to know that the hundred robbers he killed in his first adventure were all really dead men, and that they must have died from the effects of the poison in the cakes, and since her treachery had given him a new start in life he forgave her. She, too, gave up her enmity to the partners of her husband's bed and all the four lived in peace and plenty for many a long day afterwards.

X

THE BRAHMAN GIRL THAT MARRIED A TIGER

In a certain village there lived an old Brahman who had three sons and a daughter. The girl being the youngest was brought up most tenderly and became spoilt, and so whenever she saw a beautiful boy she would say to her parents that she must be wedded to him. Her parents were, therefore, much put about to devise excuses for taking her away from her youthful lovers. Thus passed on some years, till the girl was very near attaining her puberty and then the parents, fearing that they would be driven out of their caste if they failed to dispose of her hand in marriage before she came to the years of maturity, began to be eager about finding a bridegroom for her.

Now near their village there lived a fierce tiger, that had attained to great proficiency in the art of magic, and had the power of assuming different forms. Having a great taste for Brahman's food, the tiger used now and then to frequent temples and other places of public feeding in the shape of an old famished Brahman in order to share the food prepared for the Brahmans. The tiger also wanted, if possible, a Brahman wife to take to the woods, and there to make her cook his meals after her fashion. One day when he was partaking of his meals in Brahman shape at a *satra*[1], he heard the talk about the Brahman girl who was always falling in love with every beautiful Brahman boy. Said he to himself, "Praised be the face that I saw first

[1] A place of public feeding.

this morning. I shall assume the shape of a Brahman boy, and appear as beautiful as beautiful can be, and win the heart of the girl."

Next morning he accordingly became in form a great Sastrin (proficient in the *Ramayana*) and took his seat near the *ghat* of the sacred river of the village. Scattering holy ashes profusely over his body he opened the *Ramayana* and began to read.

"The voice of the new Sastrin is most enchanting. Let us go and hear him," said some women among themselves, and sat down before him to hear him expound the great book. The girl for whom the tiger had assumed this shape came in due time to bathe at the river, and as soon as she saw the new Sastrin fell in love with him, and bothered her old mother to speak to her father about him, so as not to lose her new lover. The old woman too was delighted at the bridegroom whom fortune had thrown in her way, and ran home to her husband, who, when he came and saw the Sastrin, raised up his hands in praise of the great god Mahesvara. The Sastrin was now invited to take his meals with them, and as he had come with the express intention of marrying the daughter he, of course, agreed.

A grand dinner followed in honour of the Sastrin, and his host began to question him as to his parentage, etc., to which the cunning tiger replied that he was born in a village beyond the adjacent wood. The Brahman had no time to wait for better enquiry, and as the boy was very fair he married his danghter to him the very next day. Feasts followed for a month, during which time the bridegroom gave every satisfaction to his new relatives, who

supposed him to be human all the while. He also did full justice to the Brahmanic dishes, and gorged everything that was placed before him.

After the first month was over the tiger-bridegroom bethought him of his accustomed prey, and hankered after his abode in the woods. A change of diet for a day or two is all very well, but to renounce his own proper food for more than a month was hard. So one day he said to his father-in-law, "I must go back soon to my old parents, for they will be pining at my absence. But why should we have to bear the double expense of my coming all the way here again to take my wife to my village? So if you will kindly let me take the girl with me I shall take her to her future home, and hand her over to her mother-in-law, and see that she is well taken care of." The old Brahman agreed to this, and replied, "My dear son-in law, you are her husband and she is yours and we now send her with you, though it is like sending her into the wilderness with her eyes tied up. But as we take you to be everything to her, we trust you to treat her kindly." The mother of the bride shed tears at the idea of having to send her away, but nevertheless the very next day was fixed for the journey. The old woman spent the whole day in preparing cakes and sweetmeats for her daughter, and when the time for the journey arrived, she took care to place in her bundles and on her head one or two margosa[1] leaves to keep off demons. The relatives of the bride requested her husband to allow her to rest wherever she found

1 "Among high caste Hindus when girls leave one village and go to another the old woman of the house—the mother or grandmother—always places in her bundles and on her head a few margosa leaves as a talisman against demons.

shade, and to eat wherever she found water, and to this he agreed, and so they began their journey.

The boy tiger and his human wife pursued their journey for two or three *ghatikas*[1] in free and pleasant conversation, when the girl happened to see a fine pond, round which the birds were warbling their sweet notes. She requested her husband to follow her to the water's edge and to partake of some of the cakes and sweetmeats with her. But he replied, "Be quiet, or I shall show you my original shape." This made her afraid, so she pursued her journey in silence until she saw another pond, when she asked the same question of her husband, who replied in the same tone. Now she was very hungry, and not liking her husband's tone, which she found had greatly changed ever since they had entered the woods, said to him, "Show me your original shape."

No sooner were these words uttered than her husband remained no longer a man. Four legs, a striped skin, a long tail and a tiger's face came over him suddenly and, horror of horrors ! a tiger and not a man stood before her! Nor were her fears stilled when the tiger in human voice began as follows :—"Know henceforth that I your husband, am a tiger—this very tiger that now speaks to you. If you have any regard for your life you must obey all my orders implicitly, for I can speak to you in human voice and understand what you say. In a couple of *ghatikas* we shall reach my home, of which you will become the mistress. In the front of my house you will see half a dozen tubs, each of which

1 "A *ghatika* is 24 minutes. The story being Hindu, the Hindu method of reckoning distance is used.

you must fill up daily with some dish or other cooked in your own way. I shall take care to supply you with all the provisions you want." So saying the tiger slowly conducted her to his house.

The misery of the girl may more be imagined than described, for if she were to object she would be put to death. So, weeping all the way, she reached her husband's house. Leaving her there he went out and returned with several pumpkins and some flesh, of which she soon prepared a curry and gave it to her husband. He went out again after this and returned in the evening with several vegetables and some more flesh and gave her an order :— "Every morning I shall go out in search of provisions and prey and bring something with me on my return : you must keep cooked for me whatever I leave in the house."

So next morning as soon as the tiger had gone away she cooked everything left in the house and filled all the tubs with food. At the 10th *ghatika* the tiger returned and growled out, "I smell a man ! I smell a woman in my wood." And his wife for very fear shut herself up in the house. As soon as the tiger had satisfied his appetite he told her to open the door, which she did, and they talked together for a time, after which the tiger rested awhile, and then went out hunting again. Thus passed many a day, till the tiger's Brahman wife had a son, which also turned out to be only a tiger.

One day, after the tiger had gone out to the woods, his wife was crying all alone in the house, when a crow happened to peck at some rice that was scattered near her, and seeing the girl crying, began to shed tears.

"Can you assist me?." asked the girl.

"Yes," said the crow.

So she brought out a palmyra leaf and wrote on it with an iron nail all her sufferings in the wood, and requested her brothers to come and relieve her. This palmyra leaf she tied to the neck of the crow, which, seeming to understand her thoughts, flew to her village and sat down before one of her brothers. He untied the leaf and read the contents of the letter and told them to his other brothers. All the three then started for the wood, asking their mother to give them something to eat on the way. She had not enough of rice for the three, so she made a big ball of clay and stuck it over with what rice she had, so as to make it look like a ball of rice. This she gave to the brothers to eat on their way and started them off to the woods.

They had not proceeded long before they espied an ass. The youngest, who was of a playful disposition, wished to take the ass with him. The two elder brothers objected to this for a time, but in the end they allowed him to have his own way. Further on they saw an ant, which the middle brother took with him. Near the ant there was a big palmyra tree lying on the ground, which the eldest took with him to keep off the tiger.

The sun was now high in the horizon and the three brothers became very hungry. So they sat down near a tank and opened the bundle containing the ball of rice. To their utter disappointment they found it to be all clay, but being extremely hungry they drank all the water in the pond and continued their journey. On leaving the tank they found a big iron tub belonging to the washerman of the

adjacent village. This they took also with them in addition to the ass, the ant and the palmyra tree Following the road described by their sister in her letter by the crow, they walked on and on till they reached the tiger's house.

The sister, overjoyed to see her brothers again, ran out at once to welcome them: "My dearest brothers, I am so glad to see that you have come here to relieve me after all, but the time for the tiger's coming home is approaching, so hide yourselves in the loft, and wait till he is gone." So saying she helped her brothers to ascend into the loft. By this time the tiger returned, and perceived the presence of human beings by the peculiar smell. He asked his wife whether any one had come to their house. She said, "No." But when the brothers, who with their trophies of the way—the ass, the ant, and so on—were sitting upon the loft, saw the tiger dallying with their sister they were greatly frightened; so much so that the youngest through fear began to make water, and, as he had drunk a great quantity of water from the pond, he flooded the whole room. The other two also followed his example, and thus there was a deluge in the tiger's house.

"What is all this?" said the terrified tiger to his wife.

"Nothing," said she, "but the urine of your brothers-in-law. They came here a watch[1] ago, and as soon as you have finished your meals, they want to see you."

"Can my brothers-in-law make all this water?" thought the tiger to himself.

[1] A 'watch' is a *jama*, or three hours.

He then asked them to speak to him, whereon the youngest brother put the ant which he had in his hand into the ear of the ass, and as soon as the latter was bitten, it began to bawl out most horribly.

"How is it that your brothers have such a hoarse voice?" said the tiger to his wife.

He next asked them to show their legs. Taking courage at the stupidity of the tiger on the two former occasions, the eldest brother now stretched out the palmyra tree.

"By my father, I have never seen such a leg," said the tiger, and asked his brothers-in-law to show their bellies. The second brother now showed the tub, at which the tiger shuddered, and saying, "such a lot of urine, such a harsh voice, so stout a leg and such a belly, truly I have never heard of such persons as these!" he ran away.

It was already dark, and the brothers, wishing to take advantage of the tiger's terror, prepared to return home with their sister at once. They ate up what little food she had, and ordered her to start. Fortunately for her, her tiger-child was asleep. So she tore it into two pieces and suspended them over the hearth, and, thus getting rid of the child, she ran off with her brothers towards home.

Before leaving she bolted the front door from inside, and went out at the back of the house. As soon as the pieces of the cub, which were hung up over the hearth, began to roast they dripped, which made the fire hiss and sputter; and when the tiger returned at about midnight, he

found the door shut and heard the hissing of the fire which he mistook for the noise of cooking muffins.[5]

"I see!" said he to himself, "how very cunning you are! you have bolted the door and are cooking muffins for your brothers! Let us see if we can't get your muffins." So saying he went round to the back door and entered his house, and was greatly perplexed to find his cub torn in two and being roasted, his house deserted by his Brahman wife, and his property plundered! For his wife, before leaving, had taken with her as much of the tiger's property, as she could conveniently carry.

The tiger now discovered all the treachery of his wife and his heart grieved for the loss of his son, that was now no more. He determined to be revenged on his wife, and to bring her back into the wood, and there tear her into many pieces in place of only two. But how to bring her back? He assumed his original shape of a young bridegroom, making, of course, due allowance for the number of years that had passed since his marriage, and next morning went to his father-in-law's house. His brothers-in-law and his wife saw from a distance the deceitful form he had assumed and devised means to kill him. Meanwhile the tiger Brahman approached his father-in-law's house, and the old people welcomed him. The younger ones, too, ran here and there to bring provisions to feed him sumptuously, and the tiger was highly pleased at the hospitable way in which he was received.

There was a ruined well at the back of the house, and the eldest of the brothers placed some thin sticks across its

5 Tamil *tosai*.

mouth, over which he spread a fine mat. Now it is usual to ask guests to have an oil bath before dinner, and so his three brothers-in-law requested the tiger to take his seat on the fine mat for his bath. As soon as he sat on it the thin sticks being unable to bear his weight gave way and down fell the cunning tiger with a heavy crash! The well was at once filled in with stones and other rubbish, and thus the tiger was effectually prevented from doing any more mischief.

But the Brahman girl, in memory of her having married a tiger, raised a pillar over the well and planted a *tulasi*[6] shrub on the top of it. Morning and evening, for the rest of her life, she used to smear the pillar with sacred cowdung and water the *tulasi* shrub.

This story is told to explain the Tamil proverb: "*Summa irukkiraya, suruvattai kattattuma*," which means—

"Be quiet, or I shall show you my original shape."

[6] A fragrant herb, held in great veneration by the Hindus; *Ocymum sanctum*. This herb is sacred alike to Siva and Vishnu. Those species specially sacred to Siva are—*Vendulasi*, *Siru-tulasi*, and *Siva-tulasi*; those to Vishnu are *Sendulasi*, *Karundulasi* and *Vishnu-tulasi*.

XI

THE GOOD HUSBAND AND THE BAD WIFE

In a remote village there lived a Brahman whose good nature and charitable disposition were proverbial. Equally proverbial also were the ill-nature and uncharitable disposition of the Brahmani—his wife. But as Paramesvara (God) had joined them in matrimony, they had to live together as husband and wife, though their temperaments were so incompatible. Every day the Brahman had a taste of his wife's ill-temper, and if any other Brahman was invited to dinner by him, his wife, somehow or other, would manage to drive him away.

One fine summer morning a rather stupid Brahman friend of his came to visit our hero and was at once invited to dinner. He told his wife to have dinner ready earlier than usual, and went off to the river to bathe. His friend not feeling very well that day wanted a hot bath at the house, and so did not follow him to the river, but remained sitting in the outer verandah. If any other guest had come the wife would have accused him of greediness to his face and sent him away, but this visitor seemed to be a special friend of her lord, so she did not like to say anything but she devised a plan to make him go away of his own accord.

She proceeded to smear the ground before her husband's friend with cowdung, and placed in the midst of it a long pestle supporting one end of it against the wall. She

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next approached the pestle most solemnly and performed worship (*puja*) to it. The guest did not in the least understand what she was doing, and respectfully asked her what it all meant.

"This is what is called pestle worship," she replied. "I do it as a daily duty, and this pestle is meant to break the head of some human being in honour of a goddess whose feet are most devoutly worshipped by my husband. Every day as soon as he returns from his bath in the river he takes this pestle, which I am ordered to keep ready for him before his return, and with it breaks the head of any human being whom he has managed to get hold of by inviting him for a meal. This is his tribute (*dakshina*) to the goddess; to-day you are the victim."

The guest was much alarmed. "What! break the head of a guest! I at any rate shall not be deceived to-day," thought he, and prepared to run away.

The Brahman's wife appeared to sympathise with his sad plight, and said :—

"Really, I do pity you. But there is one thing you can do now to save yourself. If you go out by the front door and walk in the street my husband may follow you, so you had better go out by the back door."

To this plan the guest most thankfully agreed, and hastily ran off by the back door.

Almost immediately our hero returned from his bath, but before he could arrive his wife had cleaned up the place she had prepared for the pestle worship; and when the

Brahman not finding his friend in the house inquired of her as to what had become of him, she said in seeming anger :—

"The greedy brute! he wanted me to give him this pestle—this very pestle which I brought forty years ago as a dowry from my mother's house, and when I refused he ran away by the back-yard in haste."

But her kind-hearted lord observed that he would rather lose the pestle than his guest, even though it was a part of his wife's dowry and more than forty years old. So he ran off with the pestle in his hand after his friend crying out, "Oh Brahman! Oh Brahman! Stop please, and take the pestle."

But the story told by the old woman now seemed most true to the guest when he saw her husband running after him, and so he said, "You and your pestle may go where you please. Never more will you catch me in your house," and ran away.

XII

THE GOOD WIFE AND THE BAD HUSBAND

In a remote village there lived a man and his wife, who was a stupid little woman and believed everything that was told her. Whenever people wanted anything from her they used to come and flatter her; but this had to be done in the absence of her husband, because he was a very miserly man, and would never part with any of his money, for all he was exceedingly rich. Nevertheless, without his knowledge cunning beggars would now and then come to his wife and beg of her, and they used generally to succeed, as she was so amenable to flattery. But whenever her husband found her out he would come down heavily upon her, sometimes with words and sometimes with blows. Thus quarrels arose, till at last, for the sake of peace, the wife had to give up her charitable propensities.

Now there lived in the village a rogue of the first water, who had many a time witnessed what took place in the rich miser's family. Wishing to revive his old habit of getting what he wanted from the miser's wife he watched his opportunity and one day, when the miser had gone out on horseback to inspect his lands, he came to his wife in the middle of the day and fell down at the threshold as if overcome by exhaustion. She ran up to him at once and asked him who he was.

"I am a native of Kailasa," said he, "sent down by an old couple living there, for news of their son and his wife."

"Who are those fortunate dwellers on Siva's mountain?" said she.

On this the rogue gave the names of her husband's deceased parents, which he had taken good care, of course, to learn from the neighbours.

"Do you really come from them?" said she. "Are they doing well there? Dear old people. How glad my husband would be to see you, were he here! Sit down please, and take rest awhile till he returns. How do they live there? Have they enough to eat and to dress themselves?" These and a thousand other questions she put to the rogue, who, for his part, wanted to get away as quick as possible, as he knew full well how he would be treated if the miser should return while he was there, so he said:—

"Mother, language has no words to describe the miseries they are undergoing in the other world. They have not a rag to cover themselves, and for the last six days they have eaten nothing, and have lived on water only. It would break your heart to see them."

The rogue's pathetic words fully deceived the good woman, who firmly believed that he had come down from Kailasa, sent by the old couple to her.

"Why should they suffer so?" said she, "when their son has plenty to eat and to dress himself, and when their daughter-in-law wears all sorts of costly ornaments?"

With that she went into the house and came out with two boxes containing all the clothes of herself and her husband and gave the whole lot to the rogue, with instructions to take them to her poor old people in Kailasa. She also gave him the jewel box to be presented to her mother-in-law.

"But dress and jewels will not fill their hungry stomachs," said he.

Requesting him to wait a little, the silly woman brought out her husband's cash chest and emptied the contents into the rogue's coat,[1] who now went off in haste, promising to give everything to the good people in Kailasa. Our good lady, according to etiquette, conducted him a few hundred yards along the road and sent news of herself through him to her relatives, and then returned home. The rogue now tied up all his booty in his coat and ran in haste towards the river and crossed over it.

No sooner had our heroine reached home than her husband returned after his inspection of his lands. Her pleasure at what she had done was so great, that she met him at the door and told him all about the arrival of the messenger from Kailasa, and how she had sent clothes and jewels and money through him to her husband's parents. The anger of her husband knew no bounds. But he checked himself for a while, and asked her which road the messenger from Kailasa had taken, as he said he wanted to follow him and send some more news to his parents. To this she willingly agreed and pointed out the direction the rogue had gone. With rage in his heart at

[1] *Uparani or upavastra*, an upper garment.

the trick played upon his stupid wife our hero rode on in hot haste and after a ride of two *ghatikas* he caught sight of the flying rogue, who, finding escape hopeless, climbed up into a big *pipal* tree. Our hero soon reached the bottom of the tree and shouted to the rogue to come down.

"No, I cannot, this is the way to Kailasa," said the rogue, and climbed up on the top of the tree. Seeing no chance of the rogue's coming down and as there was no third person present to whom he could call for help, our hero tied his horse to an adjacent tree and began climbing up the *pipal* tree himself. The rogue thanked all his gods when he saw this, and waited till his enemy had climbed nearly up to him, and then, throwing down his bundle of booty, leapt quickly from branch to branch till he reached the bottom. He then got upon his enemy's horse and with his bundle rode into a dense forest in which no one was likely to find him. Our hero being much older in years was no match for the rogue. So he slowly came down, and cursing his stupidity in having risked his horse to recover his property, returned home at his leisure. His wife, who was waiting his arrival, welcomed him with a cheerful countenance and said,

"I thought as much. You have sent away your horse to Kailasa to be used by your father."

Vexed as he was at his wife's words, our hero replied in the affirmative to conceal his own stupidity.

Thus, some there are in this world, who, though they may not willingly give away anything, pretend to have done so when by accident or stupidity they happen to lose it.

XIII

THE FOUR GOOD SISTERS

In the town of Tanjai there reigned a king named Hariji, who was a very good and charitable sovereign. In his reign the tiger and the bull drank out of the same pool, the serpent and the peacock amused themselves under the same tree; and thus even birds and beasts of a quarrelsome and inimical character lived together like sheep of the same flock. While the brute creation of the great God was thus living in friendship and happiness, need it be said that this king's subjects led a life of peace and prosperity unknown in any other country under the canopy of heaven?

But, for all the peace which his subjects enjoyed, Hariji himself had no joy. His face was always drooping, his lips never moved in laughter, and he was as sad as sad could be, because he had no son. After trying in vain the various distributions of charitable gifts, which his elders and priests recommended, he resolved within himself to retire into the wilderness, there to propitiate Mahesvara, the great god of gods, hoping thus to have his desires fulfilled. No sooner had this thought entered into his mind than he called his ministers to his side, and, informing them of his intention, made over to them the kingdom of Tanjai. He gave strict orders to them to look after the interests of his subjects, warning them that, if they failed in this, they would have to pay forfeit with their heads. Thus appointing his ministers in his place, to order his realm during his absence, Hariji retired to the nearest jungle as a hermit.

The monarch of Tanjai, who had been attended with innumerable servants, now became his own servant and master. He removed all his royal garments and clothed himself with the bark of trees. To him, whose bed had been till then the softest of cushions made of the finest and most delicate cotton, the dried leaves now furnished a mattress. Roots and fruits were now his only food, in the place of a thousand different dishes, which had at one time been daily spread before him. Every morning he rose from his bed of leaves, bathed in the coldest water, and sat meditating on Mahesvara till about the twentieth *ghatika*[1]. Then he would rise up and taste something of the roots or fruits he happened to see near him. In the evening again he would bathe and sit meditating till midnight. Then thrice sipping water only he would retire to rest (if rest it deserves to be called) for ten *ghatikas*[2]. Such was his daily routine and in this most severe penance he wasted away by degrees, for nearly two years. All his ribs began to project from his sides, his skin dried up, and one could count his nerves and veins. For all that, he never wavered in his penances.

On the first day of the third year after Hariji commenced his penance, the great god Mahesvara came to recognize the monarch in his dovotee. Mounting his bull, with Parvati, his goddess, on his left, he appeared before the royal hermit who literally danced with joy at the sight of his long-looked-for god !

"Thy prayers and praises, my good son, have been rising before our throne in Kailasa[3] for the past two years,

[1] 2 p. m.; a *ghatika* is twenty-four minutes, 30 *ghatikas* make one day, and 30 one night. Thus 60 *ghatikas* make a day and night.

[2] Four hours.

[3] The abode of Siva.

like a pillar of virtue, and have brought me down to thee to grant thy boon. Ask and thou shalt have." Thus spake Mahesvara with a smile on his face and his right arm raised to bless.

"My great God," replied the king, "language has no words to express the great joy and pleasure I have had to-day in that thou in thy holiness hast condescended to visit thy poor dog. This slave of thy most divine righteousness has had no child conferred upon him, though his beard has whitened with age. To gain this boon, and thus sweeten the few more years he has to drag out in this world, he has been propitiating thy divine holiness."

"All men must undergo the miseries of a former life in this one," replied the god. "However, for thy long penance we have been pleased with thee, and grant thee this request. Choose then :—A son who shall always be with thee till death, but who shall be the greatest fool in the whole world ; or four daughters who shall live with thee for a short time, then leave thee and return before thy death, but who shall be the incarnation of learning. To thee is left to choose between the two." Thus spake Mahesvara; and Hariji the hermit chose the daughters. The god gave him a mango-fruit to be presented to his queen, and disappeared.

The fruit of his long penance Hariji thus held in his hand. He cared nothing for the prospect of having only daughters. Daughters or sons, he wanted to have children, and so his desire had been crowned with success. A thousand times happy he felt himself in the prospect before

him, as he returned to his country. Great was the joy of his subjects and ministers, to see among them again their beloved sovereign.

The king called for his priests, and, fixing an auspicious hour for the presentation of the fruit, gave it to his queen. She became pregnant, and in due course gave birth to four daughters as beautiful as Rati.[1] And thus Hariji obtained four daughters by the grace of God in his old age. Their names were Gangabai, Yamunabai, Kamalabai, and Nilabai.

He left no stone unturned to give them a liberal education. Professors for every branch of learning were appointed, and the girls, before they were in their tenth year, had been taught the four *Vedas*, the six *Sastras*, the sixty-four kinds of learning, and all the rest of it. They became great *Panditas* and were like four great jewels among the woman-kind of those days.

One day the old king was seated in the first storey of his palace to be rubbed over with oil.[2] The oil-rubber began to apply the oil to his head so irregularly and in such a stupid way, that his daughters, who were looking on at a distance, were highly vexed, and calling to their mother asked her to interfere, and send the man away. Then they themselves applied the oil to their father's head, in so delicate a way that the old king did not in the least feel that anything was being rubbed over it. He was exceedingly pleased with them, and after sending them away finished his bath.

1 The wife of Kama (the god of love) and goddess of beauty.

2 A South Indian custom, corresponding to a bath.

He now bethought him of Mahesvara's condition when granting his desire for children,—that his intelligent daughters should leave him before they had been long with him. "How will they leave me? If I give them away in marriage, then, of course, they will leave me: but if I prevent this, and make some other arrangement for them I shall avert the unhappy prophecy of the god!" So thought Hariji, and so has many another fool thought, only to bring down swift retribution on his head.

After finishing his ablutions the king did not go into the dining hall, but retired to his couch and lay down sulkily. According to the ancient customs of Hindu monarchs this was a sign of a great uneasiness of mind, and the news that the king had not taken even a grain of rice after his oil-bath spread throughout the palace. The queen came flying to know the reason of her lord's displeasure. "Call my minister at once," was his order, and the queen sent word to that officer.

As soon as the minister arrived the king ordered him to summon a great council within a *ghatika*, as he had an important question which could be solved only by that learned body.

The assembly was hastily called, and the members collected, anxiously waiting for the matter to be set before them. The king came and took his seat, and after looking gravely round him rose up and said—"My learned councillors that have met here to-day, I have a great question to put before you for your opinion. Many of you are traders, and occasionally, for various reasons, travel to

different countries. When you procure a rare object, or a very precious jewel, or a valuable ornament, do you keep it for your own use, or do you give it away to somebody else? Kindly think over the matter well before you give me your answer."

Thus spoke Hariji, and all present exclaimed that, if the object were very rare they would prefer keeping it to themselves.

"Exactly! well said!" vociferated the king. "Even so do I wish to act! After great hardship and severe penance I obtained through the grace of Mahêsvara four daughters. They are my gems, my jewels, and my ornaments. Why should I give them away in marriage to another? Why should I not myself marry them and retain them under me? If you would keep the rare things you acquire to yourselves, why should not I also do the same?"

All his councillors hung their heads for very shame. They were disgusted at the turn which their generalization had been made to take and saying, "As it pleases Your Majesty," took leave of their sovereign, all thinking that their king had gone mad.

It was not from any insane tendency that the old king spoke in that shameless manner before so learned and respectable an assembly. He had firmly resolved within himself to marry all his four daughters himself; and as soon as his councillors had left him, he called his minister to his side, and asked him to go and consult his daughters about it. By this means the king foolishly thought that he would reverse Mahesvara's prediction that his daughters

should leave him early, and see him no more till just before his death.

The minister was in a delicate position. If he objected to take the news to his daughters, the old king might be enraged and punish him : and if he boldly stood before the girls and spoke to them shamelessly about their father's intention to marry them himself, they might become enraged and murder him ! Of the two alternatives he chose death at the innocent hands of the princesses, rather than at the guilty hands of a king, who had become so mad as to be in love with his own daughters. So he went to them.

The princesses had as great a regard for their father's minister as they had for their father ; and when they saw him approaching their mansion they welcomed him, and, making him sit in their midst, wished to hear whether he had any special reason for his visit that day. When he heard the innocent talk of these children, who had not even commenced their teens, his eyes began to swim with tears at the thought of the unwelcome news he had to communicate to them. The girls, who were naturally intelligent, at once guessed from his tearful countenance, that it must be some very bad news that he had to tell, and so the eldest broke silence by sweet and well-chosen words :—

"Our kind father, for so we regard you, what is the matter with you, that you have put on such a dismal face ? Disclose to us the burden of your heart, that we also may share in your woes."

The minister could no longer contain his sorrow. He sobbed aloud and told them all the proceedings that had

taken place during the day, and how very sorry he was that they should have that morning showed their skill to their father in the oil-bath affair. The girls were greatly affected at what they heard, and the eldest, Gangabai, spoke as follows :—

"From this minute our father, is no more our father, since he has become so depraved as you represent him to be. We all now regard you as our father, and request you to oblige us in this delicate business. It is of no use to you to say 'no' to the king's question. I shall give my consent to the marriage, and tell him at the same time that I have vowed to undergo a penance for six months, after which the marriage may be duly performed. For the present I request you to oblige us with a seven-storied mansion made of lacquered wood. In each storey I request you to store up provisions sufficient for all of us for six years. The seventh storey must contain water: the sixth, vegetables; the fifth, rice; and so on: while we must occupy the first two storeys and proceed to carry on our penance. You must come here with the king on the first day of the seventh month, and then you shall see a wonderful thing! For the present, please go and inform the king of our consent to the marriage and of the penance we have resolved on for six months, during which period we must be allowed to live unobserved."

The minister was delighted to see that the princesses, though they were young in years, had a very sound knowledge of the world. He promised to oblige them most willingly, and gave orders, with the permission of Hariji the king, for the building of the lacquered mansion and for

the storage of provisions. As for the king, when he heard that his daughters had given their consent, he was overjoyed, and eagerly waited for the seventh month to come. He even took special care to see the mansion was built without delay. The minister, too, left no stone unturned to supply the provisions requisite for half a dozen years. The mansion was built, and the princesses took up their abode in it for their penance. As soon as they entered they bolted the door inside, and began to meditate upon the boon-conferring goddess, Varalakshmi. For six months they meditated, and on the last day of the last month secured her favour. She appeared before them in a dream, robed in pure white silk, and applied *kunkuma* (red powder) to their foreheads in token that she had favoured them, and that from that day they might depend upon her for assistance.

Now outside this mansion, which had been built in the city of Tanjai, Hariji was counting the days, and, to occupy his time meanwhile, had decorated the city for the coming wedding of himself with his daughters, and had sent invitations to all the corners of the world. Several kings, out of simple curiosity to see the mad performance —for the old Sovereign had proclaimed to the world that he was going to marry his own daughters!—came to Tanjai, and were waiting for the wedding day.

At last, the long expected first morning of the seventh month arrived, and Hariji sent his minister again to his daughters to ascertain their wishes. Again the daughters returned word that they gave their full consent to the marriage. Hariji was overjoyed at the second intimation of compliance, and decorated himself with all his choicest

ornaments. With music before him he marched towards the lacquered mansion, the kings and the other guests following him to see how matters would terminate. When the processional music fell upon the ears of the princesses, they contemplated Varalakshmi and prayed :—

"O benign Goddess, if thou wouldst have us become the wives of a suitable husband,—a noble prince,—let this mansion rise from its present position and fall again in the midst of a jungle untrodden by human feet! Let the gates of this mansion be shut to all that may desire to open them, except to him only whom thou hast appointed to be our husband!"

The eldest led the prayer, and had scarcely finished, when the procession stopped before the mansion. And lo! a crack was heard and the lacquered mansion, as if it had wings, began to soar into the sky! In a moment it vanished out of the sight of the sinful father; and all around him with one voice cried out that he was well repaid for his wicked thoughts. At last Hariji saw the guilt of his intentions, the just punishment with which the god visited him, the fulfilment of his prophecy, and his personal share in the early fulfilment of it. He was buried in the ocean of shame and sorrow, till those around him consoled him with that part of the prophecy, which promised that his daughters should come back to him before his death.

Within the mansion the four sisters continued to live as if it were their home. They had everything they could desire, and, excepting the time they were obliged to spend in cooking and eating, spent their days in study and music. Their evenings they invariably spent most happily in playing the

sitar, and thus forgetting their sorrows. In this way they lived a life of innocent enjoyment, in the expectation that the goddess Varalakshmi would soon relieve them of their troubles by sending them a suitable husband.

At a distance of a hundred *kos* from where the princesses' mansion had been located by the will of Varalakshmi, was a kingdom named Sivapuri. In it reigned a most just king named Isabhaji. He had an only son named Thanuji, who was twenty years old,—an age which fitted him for taking the reins of the kingdom into his own hands. His royal father wished, therefore, to have his marriage celebrated. The bride chosen was the daughter of Isabhaji's own sister, and therefore Thanuji's first cousin. All liked the proposed marriage, except the prince; for though the bride was as beautiful as the moon, she was blind of one eye!

"A one-eyed wife I will *never* marry!" was his reply to the several representations his relatives made to him.

Isabhaji was already very old, and his sole object in life was to see his son married, and to handle a grand-child before his death. He had tried his best previously, on several occasions, to choose a young lady of noble family as a bride for his son, but Thanuji would have none of them. However, the king's sister, having great influence with him, compelled her brother to fix on an auspicious day for the marriage of his son to her one-eyed daughter Kurudi. Finding it hopeless to convince his father of his disinclination to marry a lady who was defective by nature, Thanuji outwardly consented, and the preparations

for the celebration of the marriage were commenced on an enormous scale.

Two days before the time appointed for the marriage the prince desired to go out hunting in a neighbouring forest. His object was not really to hunt, but to disappear in the thick wilderness, and to run away in order to evade the marriage.[1] The hunting expedition started in the early morning and reached the forest by about the sixth *ghatika*. The hunting proceeded as usual till about the eighteenth *ghatika*, when the prince was seen to run to a corner of the hunting ground, to disappear for a time, and then to emerge again from his place of concealment. The hunters, thinking that it was his pleasure, left him to himself, and engaged themselves in a different portion of the forest. Thanuji now found it a good opportunity to escape, and changing his horse for a fresh one, galloped towards the East and vanished from the sight of his vast army of hunters. Just about this time the hunt was brought to a close. "Where is the prince? Have you seen His Highness?" were the questions which the hunters put to each other. But the prince was nowhere to be found! They searched for him in the wood till darkness overcame them, and at last returned to Sivapuri, late at night, without him!

The old king was waiting the return of the prince with a sumptuous dinner; and when the hunters informed him of his disappearance he fell down in a swoon, as it were a tree cut at the roots! His sister and other relatives flew to his side to console him, and he was slowly brought back

1 This is a notable incident, as giving a *rational* explanation of the common disappearance of a prince on a hunting expedition in Oriental folktales. It usually takes place in a miraculous manner.

to his senses. It now became more than plain to him that he was himself the cause of the prince's flight, by having tried to force him to marry Kurudi against his will. He cursed Kurudi and her mother, he cursed himself, and he cursed every one involved in the proposed marriage! He at once sent for the palace soothsayer to consult him as to the safety of his son, and as to the probable date of his return. The soothsayer made his appearance and took his seat before the king with a palm-leaf book on his left and a square dice of sandal-wood on his right. When His Majesty explained to him the disappearance of the prince, and wished to know all about him, the soothsayer contemplated Ganesa, cast the sandal-wood dice thrice, and turned up a leaf of his palm-book guided to the particular page by the number thrown by the dice. He then proclaimed:—

"Sukra[1] now reigns supreme; and Sukra's course is a happy course! A marriage will be gained in the East! Be cheerful, my son, for the lost thing will surely be found within the space of two years. Meanwhile give sumptuous dinners and fees to several Brahmans every day, and Paramesvara will help you!"

The faces of the king and of every one present glowed with joy as the soothsayer proceeded in his reading of the secret lore.

"A pair of shawls for the good soothsayer!" cried out Isabhaji; and the present was accordingly given. The king fully believed that his son was to return to him

[1] The planet Venus, which is *male* in India.

in two years, and in this belief he forgot all his sorrow at his disappearance.

Let us now see what happened to the prince after his escape from the hunters. He left them about noon and galloped towards the East. By about twilight fortune conducted him towards the mansion of lacquer. The appearance of the splendid building made of strange materials, and not of brick or stone or *chunam*,[1] awakened his curiosity, and made him approach it. In addition to this, he was already dying of hunger, and wished for at least a mouthful of water. Being sure that he had left his hunters far behind, he approached the mansion and sat down in the marbled lacquer pavement of the outer verandah. The god of day was sinking down in the West, and the golden rays of his evening beauty seemed a thousand times more beautiful than he had ever seen them as they glittered on the lacquered covering of the grand palace, which by its loneliness struck awe into his mind. Before the mansion ran a rivulet from which our hero drank a handful[2] or two of water, and overcome by fatigue stretched himself on the cool surface of the palace verandah, leaving his horse to get his water and grass himself.

It has been already said that the princesses inside the mansion used to spend their evenings in playing upon sweet musical instruments and in singing. Now as soon as Thanuji had stretched himself on the verandah to sleep, sounds of sweet music fell upon his ear. They were the

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1 A strong plaster made of sea-shell lime.

2 Allusion to the native method of drinking water out of the hands by hollowing them into a sort of cup.

most exquisite notes he had ever heard in his life. Like evening zephyrs in the spring they came gently to soothe his weariness. He sat up and listened for a while to the sweet flow of music above.

"Is there a heaven in this life?" said he to himself; "have some nymphs from the divine world made this mansion their abode? or do wicked devils dwell here to feast upon night-stricken passengers?[1] However, whether they be good or bad, I *must* see the inhabitants of this palace, and leave to fate what it may bring upon me!'

The music now suddenly ceased, for it so happened that the *sitar* had to be adjusted for a different tune. Meanwhile the prince rose, and went round the mansion to see whether there were any gates to it. On the North side of it he discovered a large gate-way, and inside it a gate. This he approached and gently touched, to see if it was shut or not. Now, since Varalakshmi had fixed upon prince Thanuji as the husband of the four princesses, the gate of the mansion flew open,—as the gates of a river dam unlock to the rapid rush of released waters,—and discovered to him four beautiful maidens made a thousand times more beautiful by the strange and unexpected meeting, by their evening attire, and by the lovely *sitars* in their hands.

When the princesses saw the door open and their handsome visitor standing outside it, fearing to enter in, they breathed a thanksgiving to their goddess for the gift, and laying down their *sitars*, approached Thanuji with due

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[1] The allusion here is to the common Indian idea of personal beauty of malignant female ghosts, who live by devouring human beings. See *Folklore of the Headless Horseman*: *Calcutta Review*, 1884.

respect. All four humbly prostrated themselves before him and then rose up. The eldest began to speak, while the other three sisters eagerly watched the movements of the visitor's face.

"Lord and husband of us all," said she, "glorious is this day to us as it has brought here our partner in life. Strange and sad is our history, but nevertheless we are all mortals, warmed by the same human blood that circulates through your Lordship's veins and equally affected by the same joys and sorrows. We will reserve our story, however, till your Lordship has dined, as we see plainly by your face that you are greatly tired. Accept us as your Lordship's wives, and we for our part have earned the richest treasure the world can give us by having met you."

His vague fears about the mansion and its inmates suddenly melted away like snow before a powerful sun, when Thanuji saw the princesses and stood listening to the speech of the eldest. He also considered that day the most glorious of his life, and took leave of them for a few seconds to secure his horse, which for all the delight that had come to him he did not forget. He then bathed hastily in the hot water the ladies prepared for him, and after praying to the great God, who had been so bountiful to him that day, sat down with three of the ladies to take his dinner. The fourth attended to the leaf-plates, and supplied fresh courses as each dish was consumed. They then related their previous stories to each other, and copiously did the prince shed tears, when he heard how it was that the princesses came to perform penance to

secure the favour of Varalakshmi ;—and the ladies, too, when they heard how king Isabhaji had worried their husband to marry his one-eyed cousin, and how he had run away from the hunting party to avoid the marriage which so disgusted him. All were glad at the fortunate turn their lives had taken, and from that evening the prince and the princesses began to live most happily together as husband and wives entirely forgetting their former homes.

Thus, hidden in an ocean of joy, Thanuji lived for two full years in the lacquered palace, in the company of the four princesses to whom fortune had conducted him ; while they were one and all grateful to their goddess Varalakshmi for having sent them so noble and beautiful a prince as their partner in life. After two full years had been thus passed, the prince one day thought of his old father, and the usual cheerfulness left his face. His wives noticed the change and desired to be informed of the thoughts which were passing through his mind. He, noble in mind as in body, told them outright that he was thinking of his father, and that the idea of not having seen him for two years made him sad. The eldest princess as usual was the first to speak:—

"My dearest lord, it has been our misfortune to have lost a father, and we do not wish to see him again if we can help it. But we do not see any reason, therefore, why you should lose yours, who is also a father to us. Nor do we see why we should continue to live for ever in this wilderness, while you have a kingdom to govern. My advice is, that you go now to Sivapuri, see your old father, and interest him in our behalf, so that you may be able to take us where

we shall have a home, a father-in-law to worship, and such society as becomes our position. You will thus be able to arrange for our living in the world like other people, without wasting our youth in this desert."

The prince thanked his queens for their sound advice, who began to make preparations for sending their husband back to his parents. They supplied him with fine sweetmeats for the way, and, with the good wishes of his wives, Thanuji started for Sivapuri.

He reached the town on the second evening after he left the lacquered palace, but the inhabitants were not able to recognize him, as it was already twilight. He arrived at the palace at about the third *ghatika* of the night, and prostrated himself before his father. The old king had been counting the days and the hours for his son's return, and as the second year rolled away and the prince did not make his appearance, he had been greatly enraged against the soothsayer whose prophecy had thus nearly proved untrue. The cunning soothsayer had been daily predicting one week more when, fortunately for him,—or the old king's wrath would have known no bounds,— and fortunately for the old king himself, considering his advanced age,— the prince suddenly turned up. Isabhaji wept for mingled joy and sorrow; joy at having recovered his son, and sorrow at that son's neglect of his old father for so long. But all is well that ends well, so the old king praised his household gods for having given him back his son, and merely inquired into his history for the past two years.

When Isabhaji found out that by good fortune his son had won the love of the four princesses of Tanjai, he

wished his son every prosperity in the world, and gave him permission to make every arrangement to bring them to the palace at Sivapuri, and to marry them regularly.

But Thanuji wished to wait a while, and his father allowed him his way.

Now the news that Thanuji had won the love of the four fair princesses of Tanjai reached his aunt, the sister of Isabhaji, and his cousin, the one-eyed Kurudi. His aunt's dearest ambition had always been to unite her daughter to the prince, but she now thought that she must banish all hopes of its fulfilment, as long as the four fair princesses lived. Her daughter, however, was a scheming sort of girl, and determined somehow to get one of the four princesses of Tanjai into her own quarters, and there to murder her.

"Then the other three ladies will spurn the prince," thought Kurudi, "and he will have no other course open to him but to marry me."

For this task she engaged a doubled-up old woman, instructed her as to the position of the lacquered palace, and told her that she was to try her best to get into the good graces of the princesses. She was to serve them for a time as a faithful servant, and wait her opportunity to bring one of them away. Should she succeed in this, Kurudi promised her ample rewards.

The doubled-up old witch started with provisions for a month, and erected for herself a temporary hut in the forest at the gate of the lacquered mansion. Her nights

she spent on a platform on a tree for fear of beasts of prey, and her days in her hut. After cooking and eating a little rice in the morning she would take her stand near the gate of the mansion and bawl out :--

"My children! Have you all forgotten me, your poor old foster-mother? Oh, how tenderly I brought you all up in your earliest days! And remembering you, I have deserted all my relations, children and friends at Tanjai, and have traced you to this wood. If you would take me into your service, I shall still continue to render you what help I can, in washing your clothes, in preparing your meals, in combing your hair, and other domestic duties, which it was once my delight to perform while I had the charge of you all till your seventh year. What a foolish old king he was to think of marrying you to himself, and thus to have lost you!"

These and a thousand mournful tales of the past, which she had carefully learnt from the one-eyed Kurudi and her mother, she would bawl out. But the ladies would never do anything without the consent of their husband, and their doors, too, would never open to any one except their lord.

After living with his father for a month, Thanuji returned to the lacquered mansion. He noticed the hut in front of the palace gates, but did not care to enquire who lived in it, and went on and touched the gate, which opened to him. He entered in and gave his wives all their father-in-law's presents, for the old king had sent them through his son several costly ornaments and cloths. The ladies put him a thousand questions as to how he spent the

month, and were eager to see Sivapuri, and to live there as Thanuji's queens, under the kind protection of their good father-in-law. But the prince told them to wait for a few more months till his aunt could dispose of Kurudi in marriage to some one, for he hated the idea of taking them to the palace while his cousin and enemy dwelt in it,—that cousin whose hand he had repeatedly refused, and whom he could never hereafter marry as long as he lived.

The prince's wives then told him about the old woman, and Thanuji had great doubts as to the wisdom of admitting her into the mansion. Having studied tricks at courts and elsewhere, he suspected that the old woman came from his one-eyed enemy; but she left nothing unaccomplished on her part. Her repeated cries, with which the serene palace of the wilderness began to echo, at last aroused some pity for her in the heart of the prince.

"Never mind," said he at last, "let us admit her and watch her character. If it is suspicious, we will punish her; if on the contrary it is good, we shall be glad of having secured her services."

Thus with his permission the old hag was entertained, and from that moment, it was as if a serpent had been entertained to sting its own master, who fed it with milk and fruits. Deep, tricky, and a trained witch, the old hag pretended to do all sorts of kindnesses to the Tanjai princesses and their affectionate husband.

There was nothing which she would not do with her own hands. Early she rose, bathed and cooked, and

attended to the wants of the ladies, who after pleasant nights of singing and dancing slept very late in the mornings. The princesses found her invaluable, and this necessity for her services, in addition to the assumed kindness of the hag, increased their liking for her. The ladies loved her, and their lord Thanuji saw no reason, for the five months he remained for the second time in the forest, to observe anything bad in the character of the old woman. Again, he remembered his old father, and so, recommended his queens to the kind care of the old dame, he again went to Sivapuri for a month, taking with him his wives' gifts to his father.

The old woman was only waiting for the return of the prince Thanuji to Sivapuri. The second day after he had left the palace, she induced the princesses to take an oilbath, and in the oil she mixed a herb which was able to produce insensibility lasting for three days in the strongest constitution. While the oil was being applied to the heads of the princesses, they felt giddy, and before the bath was over one and all of them were in a dead swoon. The wicked old woman now took the eldest on her back, and leaving the others to themselves to live or perish, flew away to Sivapuri with the nimbleness of a vixen.

She placed her burden before Kurudi, who amply rewarded her and sent her away. This one-eyed devil in woman's form now proceeded to take full vengeance on one whom she regarded as the chief of her enemies. She sent for a barber and had the hair of Gangabai's head cut off, the insensibility that still overcame the poor girl making her unconscious of the loss of woman's most precious jewel.

Kurudi, next proceeding to torture her enemy, sent for needles and thrust one into each pore of her skin. The pain caused by the needles made Gangabai open her eyes, and being very intelligent, she at once guessed the calamity that had come upon her. Not caring for herself, she asked her enemy, the one-eyed Kurudi, whether her sisters were all safe.

"Yes, they are, and *you* shall pay for all the mischief they have done and for your own to boot!" roared Kurudi gnashing her teeth.

Gangabai then closed her eyes, never to open them again her enemy thought; for the effects of the drug, and pain caused by the needles, made her almost a corpse. Kurudi next tore out her eyes, and told two of her maid-servants to throw the now mutilated body into a ruined well at a short distance from the palace. They did so accordingly, and then went about their duties.

The whole of one day and one night Gangabai floated on the water in that ruined well, without recovering from her swoon, and not until the morning of the fourth day after the oil had been applied to her head, did she fully come to her senses. At first she felt herself to be floating on the surface of the water, but as soon as she began to recover her faculties her body began to sink. She caught hold of a step in the well, guided to it by instinct, for her eyes were gone, and she remained immersed in the water with only her face above the surface. The needle operation, her questions to a one-eyed lady about the safety of her own sisters, and that lady's affirmative reply—all came

back to her recollection as if it were a dream. She now came to understand her misfortune.

"Ah!—that I should have had confidence in that old woman," she cried, "she must have given me some drug, made me insensible, and given me over to my enemy of the one-eye, of whom Thanuji used so often to speak. Alas! Thanuji, you are passing your days merrily with your father, not knowing the fate that has come over your wives, fully believing that the old woman, whom you recommended to them, is properly discharging her duties! I do not know what has become of my sisters! I do not know where I am! My eyes are gone!"

The needles embedded in her body gave her the most excruciating pain, and she was unable even to weep. At last she began to pant as if suffocated.

The well in which she was struggling for life belonged to a neatherd, and round it he kept a garden, in which there were half a dozen beds containing tender cabbages. He came to water his vegetables, and on approaching the well with his pitcher he heard a voice as if in great pain, slowly issuing from it, but the water was too deep for him to see what was in the well. Now neatherds have queer notions as to devils and witchcraft, and he imagined that the sounds in the well emanated from a devil that must have taken up a temporary abode therein. So, he shouted out, looking down the mouth of the well,—

"O you devil! If you do not tell me who you are, and why you have thus invaded my possessions, I will throw rubbish into this already half-ruined well, and cover you up!"

Gangabai, who was only waiting to hear some person's voice, spoke slowly, in pain though she was, as she was afraid that silence would mean burial in the well,—

"Kind and noble gentleman! I am too weak to tell you the whole story. I am a lady born of noble parents and have come to this wretched condition through my sins in a former life. If you will kindly take me up, regard me as one of your daughters, and restore me to health, I shall reward you amply."

The neatherd, whose name was Govinda, was a man of very kind disposition, and his heart melted at the idea of calamity befallen one of the fair sex born of noble parents. So he got down into the well, took Gangabai up, and shed tears to see so noble a form cruelly deprived of eyes and hair, and suffering from cruel tortures from needles.

"Cover my body with your cloth," said the princess, "and take me to your home at once. I greatly fear my enemy may watch me and try to kill me again."

So the neatherd, trembling at her words, took her home in haste. As soon as the princess felt herself safe in the house of the kind neatherd, she spoke to him thus:—

"My respected protector, my father,—for so do I regard you for taking me out of the well,—I am a princess and a virtuous lady. This is enough for you to know for the present. More I shall relate to you after I recover from my pain. If you begin to pull out the needles as I am, I should die, I think, before half a dozen were removed. You will do better by cooking rice in a large vessel, emptying it on the ground and holding me over the steam while

you pull them out. Keep on doing this till the last needle is removed, and I shall get well."

The princess then closed her lips, and her body was like that of one in deep slumber. The neatherd, who already respected the princess for the majesty of her form, now began the treatment according as she had said. That so noble a creature should have come to such calamity, aroused in his heart greater and greater pity. The treatment went on for a week, during which, now and then, Gangabai would relate to the old neatherd, who never left her bed-side, parts of her story. Thus by degrees Govinda came to know the whole of it. The princess, too, recovered, except that her eyes were gone, and her head still shaven. These defects had to be remedied before her health could be said to be really restored. For this she propitiated the boon-conferring goddess Varalakshmi, and then she sneezed, when lo! there dropped from her nostrils seven precious gems! She called to Govinda and addressed him thus:—

"My respected Govinda, my kind protector, I have to trouble you still more. These seven gems has Varalakshmi just given me. Take six for yourself, convert the seventh one into money, and buy some cows. Milk all the cows morning and evening, boil down the whole of the milk into only two measures, and give them to me."

The neatherd took the gems, locked six of them in his box and went with the seventh to the *bazar*. When he showed it to the gem-assayers they estimated its value at seven *lakhs* of *mohars*, for which enormous sum he

disposed of it to a rich merchant. He could have purchased all the cows in Sivapuri for that amount, but instead of doing so, he bought only a hundred fine milch cows, and brought home the other portion of the money. Govinda truthfully told what he had done to Gangabai, and she was delighted at his uprightness. The neatherd, for his part, now began to regard her as a goddess. The milk of the one hundred cows he boiled down into two measures as directed, and placed them before her morning and evening. She used this milk in her food and daily improved in health.

We must here leave Gangabai under the kind protection of our neatherd, and turn to inquire about her other sisters. It has been already said that all the four sisters fell into a swoon, when the old woman applied the oil to their heads. Gangabai only was removed to Kurudi's palace, while the other three continued insensible for three days, coming to their senses on the fourth morning. What was their astonishment when they missed their eldest sister and the old woman ! They began to suspect their husband.

"Has our lord played this trick upon us to take our eldest sister to his palace at Sivapuri and to leave us all here, in everlasting banishment ? Shan't we be angry with him when he comes ? For our sister will never forget us, and will soon bring him back."

Thus resolved they in their minds, and, being very innocent and timid, passed their days patiently waiting till their husband and their sister should return. They would soon return together they thought, but they were doomed to be disappointed.

After staying with his father for a month the prince returned to the forest with great eagerness to meet his dear wives, for he knew nothing of the calamity that had befallen them. When he entered he found no joy in the palace, but the three sisters lying down each by herself with no mirth or welcome in their countenances. He was greatly vexed, and missed his eldest queen, whom he loved best and as to whom the other queens suspected him.

"Where is my Gangabai, my dears? And why have you all got such dismal faces?" asked Thanuji.

Till then they had thought that their sister was safe with their husband at Sivapuri, but when the prince enquired after her, they fell off their couches, and, weeping and wailing, inquired what had happened to their sister! It was now plain that some trick had been played upon them all by the old woman. The prince asked them to relate what had taken place in the palace since he had left it, and they told him everything. It then became as clear as the day to Thanuji that the old woman, who pretended such affection for them, was a rogue, and that she had taken his love Gangabai to Kurudi for some foul purpose. He consoled his three other wives, cursed the day on which he took in the old woman, and started at once in search of his lost love. Her sisters were equally anxious about her, and promised to be careful during his absence.

"The door shall open to none except to yourself, my lord, and that, too, only when you bring us back our sister," said the youngest of the sisters. And our hero, buried in the ocean of sorrow, and not knowing how to find his lost love, returned to Sivapuri.

He informed his old father Isabhaji of what had happened, and they both sent courtiers to different parts of the kingdom to make a careful search for Gangabai. The prince also secretly made all the requisite enquiries in the palace where Kurudi and her mother were living. For six months the search went on, and yet no trace was found of the lost princess. Meanwhile Isabhaji was drawing day by day nearer to his grave, and again began to trouble his son about marrying the one-eyed Kurudi. But the prince would never agree to it.

While a whole army of courtiers were thus searching for Gangabai in the various parts of the kingdom, she was living comfortably in Govinda's house, and her diet consisted daily of the two measures of milk, morning and evening. Now Govinda had a daughter named Gopi, and she and Gangabai became very good friends. Gangabai related to her her whole history one morning and was anxious to do something in revenge to Kurudi before joining her sisters in their palace. With a scheme for this in her head she addressed Gopi thus :—

"My dear Gopi, my story is as you have heard, and my heart burns within me when I think of my treatment at the hands of that one-eyed witch. I ask you now to help me to repeat Kurudi's acts on herself. Convert the milk which your father brings to me at night into curds, take the curds with you and cry out in the streets—'Good curds to sell! Never have neatherds sold such curds. Fine Curds, one hundred *mohars* per measure! Good curds! Good curds!' Every one will call you a fool for putting such a price on your curds; but go to the palace and Kurudi will send for you and ask you the price of your

curds. Demand as before one hundred *mohars*. She will give the money and buy your curds, and finding them very sweet will offer to buy some from you every day. Go on giving her the curds, but do not take money for them. Only cultivate her friendship. And then I shall let you know what we must do."

Gopi obeyed Gangabai exactly and in this way secured the friendship of Kurudi. Then said Gangabai to her :—

"My dear Gopi, when you go to-morrow to the palace put on a sad countenance, and, when Kurudi comes and asks you the reason for it, tell her that you have a sister who has had lately small-pox and lost her eyes. Ask her to give you a pair of human eyes. She has with her my two eyes which she will give you. Bring them to me."

Gopi did as she was told, and when the eyes came into Gangabai's hands she put them into the empty sockets and meditated on the boon-conferring goddess Varalakshmi, when her sight was completely restored. She now for the first time beheld Gopi and her father the neatherd. She thanked them again and again a thousand times and asked Gopi to beg her hair from Kurudi under the same pretence of having a sister who had lost hers. Gopi, who had now fully secured the affections of Kurudi, brought back Gangabai's hair, and the princess put it on her head, and meditated on Varalakshmi ; when lo ! every hair returned to its proper place ! Thus, through the neatherd and his daughter, and by the divine help of Varalakshmi, Gangabai crossed the ocean of misery, and came back to her former self.

The news that Isabhaji was trying to compel his son Thanuji to marry Kurudi, was communicated by the one-eyed lady to her friend Gopi. She also informed the neatherd's daughter that, though the prince was not agreeable to the match, he would be soon compelled to give his consent to it, to oblige his father and his aunt. These bits of information were duly passed on to Gangabai, who now thought this a good opportunity to wreak her vengeance on Kurudi. So she asked Gopi to go to the palace next morning with curds, and to sit down rubbing her hair on the ground.

"My dear Gopi" said she, "if you will keep on rubbing your beautiful hair on the ground, Kurudi will call you mad, for thus insulting an ornament that nature has granted you. You must then tell her that a doctor has given you a prescription for making the hair grow quickly, that ever since you have applied it your hair has been growing at the rate of a cubit a day, and that as you are not able to take care of so great a quantity, you are rubbing it on the ground to check its growth. She will then ask you for some of the prescription, and you must agree to give it, and come to me."

Gopi agreed to all that Gangabai asked her to do, and went to the palace. She pretended to rub her hair on the ground until Kurudi came and asked her the reason, when she replied as she had been instructed. Kurudi was naturally somewhat bald-headed, and as Isabhaji had just made his son consent to marry her, her wedding day, for which she had been so long waiting, was at last approaching. To make herself, therefore, as beautiful as possible

by adding flowing hair to her charms, was an important point; so she said to Gopi:—

"My dear Gopi, I thank the day which first made us friends! My hair is a weak point with me, and if you can make your hair grow at the rate of a cubit a day, I should much like to see your doctor, and show him my head also. Will you kindly bring him to me?"

Gopi, as instructed, said—"Undoubtedly he shall be here with me to-morrow, my noble lady;" and returned home.

Gangabai was anxiously expecting to hear what had taken place in the palace between her friend Gopi and her bitter enemy Kurudi, and, when the latter came home, she related how she had promised to bring the imaginary doctor next day to the palace. Gangabai could have leapt for joy.

"My end is attained," said she in great joy, eagerly waiting for the next day to come.

As already said, the old king had made his son Thanuji consent to marry Kurudi, and the wedding day had been fixed for the tenth day of the bright half of that very month. It was just ten days before the happy event was to take place that Kurudi was expecting to see the doctor with the wonderful power of breeding hair. That morning Gangabai changed her female attire for the first time in her life for a man's and wore a doctor's robes, and so well did she carry out the disguise that her friend Gopi was hardly able to distinguish in the young doctor her friend Gangabai. Thus metamorphosed and followed by Gopi, Gangabai reached

Kurudi's house, where she was welcomed, and given a seat near its mistress.

"Can you indeed make hair grow very quickly?" asked Kurudi.

"Madam," replied the sham doctor, "I have, ever since I began practising the art, been most successful in it. On no occasion has the hair I have manipulated grown less than a cubit a day. I shall try the best of my medicines on your head. Only the old hair must be entirely removed, and the surface of the head must be turned over with a sharp knife for a day, before the medicine can be applied. In the case of tender constitutions there may be slight pain for a day, but on the second day the pain will go away, and shoots begin to appear. After that every day your hair will increase by a cubit, and a time will soon come when you will have to cut off a portion daily."

Kurudi listened to the doctor's plan, and thought to herself, that, out of the ten days that remained to her before the marriage,—making allowance for the time required for the shooting of the hair,—she might have eight cubits' length on her head on her wedding day. So she at once sat down for a clean shave.

Gangabai now wreaked full vengeance upon her enemy. Kurudi's head was shaved clean! The skin was then cut in all directions, and powdered pepper rubbed in—a soothing balm to a scored pate! Said the doctor:—

"Madam, the medicine has now been applied: you may feel a little burning sensation, but it will be all right in

a day. To-morrow, or the day after, in the morning, the shoots will begin to sprout."

Kurudi, in expectation of the fulfilment of her wishes, patiently bore the pain. A full day and night elapsed, but still the burning did not cease. Fearing that if the balm were removed the medicine would lose its effect, she patiently bore the pain for a second day, and on the third day as soon as the morning dawned she put her hand to her head to see if there were any signs of the sprouts. "The shoots have begun really to sprout," thought she, for her fingers felt the worms which had already began to breed in the matter formed on her head! Several of her servants, who had been ordered not to see her till then, were now called in to examine her head. Her mother, too, made her appearance. What they found was this:—Kurudi with her head shaved, ploughed up and pasted over with powdered pepper! They washed her head with warm water and began to treat the wounds. But they were past all treatment; for two days' exposure to such treatment had caused corruption to set in! Still the fond heart of Kurudi's mother left no stone unturned to restore her daughter. She sent servants to Gopi to look for the doctor, but neither doctor nor Gopi were to be found; for the sagacious Gangabai had removed her protector Govinda and her friend Gopi to a village outside the town on the night she tried her treatment on her one-eyed enemy.

Neither the old king Isabhaji nor his son Thanuji, of course, knew anything of what had passed in the palace where Kurudi was living; and, in honour of his marriage, the prince wished to have his rooms adorned with paintings, the better to receive his visitors during the ensuing

wedding. He therefore proclaimed that he would greatly reward any good painter that would come forward. Gangabai, who was now living outside Sivapuri, came to know of Thanuji's proclamation, and dressed herself up as a painter, and appeared before the prince. He was charmed with the fair face of the painter; and Gangabai's disguise was so complete that he failed to discover his lost love in the painter. He tested the sham artist's skill, but as Gangabai had learnt the fine arts in her younger days she easily stood the test. Then the artist put the following condition on his undertaking the task,—that no one, not even the prince, should see him while at work, and that the prince must be the first to examine the pictures when finished. Thanuji, who was much taken by the painter, agreed to everything and left him to his work.

Gangabai now bolted the door, and mixing her colours proceeded to represent her whole story on the walls, from the time that Thanuji went the second time to Sivapuri, to the point of her appearing before her lord as a painter. She drew the old woman flying with her to Kurudi; the torture she underwent at Kurudi's cruel hands; the scene at the ruined well; the portraits of Govinda and Gopi, her protectors in her calamity; her revenge on Kurudi, in the disguise of a doctor; and lastly her appearance in the attire of a painter. She not only painted the scenes, but also added explanatory notes. On the third day she came out of the room, and sent the messengers on watch outside to inform the prince that the painter had finished his work, and wanted to take his leave. When the prince came to examine the painter's work, he said:—

"My Lord, I shall come for my reward on your Highness's wedding day. You had better examine the pictures in my absence at the fifteenth *ghatika* this afternoon, for that, the soothsayers told me, is the auspicious *ghatika* (hour.) Kindly, therefore, do not examine them before that time, or I fear evil stars will make you judge ill of my powers of execution."

Gangabai said this to gain time in order to reach her home before her lord should come to recognize her in the painter. The prince accepted these new conditions, for the painter's face exercised a wonderful influence over him. His misfortune in not recovering his lost love, his approaching wedding with one whom he hated from the very bottom of his heart, his unfaithfulness to his former wives in agreeing to marry Kurudi,—all these were passing and repassing through his mind every moment, as he waited impatiently for the time when he could examine this work.

At last the hour arrived. Thanuji entered his apartment to look over the paintings, and exclaimed :—

"My dear wives are painted here! Did the painter ever see them? Ah! My dearest Gangabai is dying here! Most horrible! Oh wicked enchantress Kurudi! Oh kindly neatherd Govinda! I shall well repay for your assistance."

Then like a mad man Thanuji wept and laughed, and laughed and wept, till he came to the end.

"After all my love is living!" exclaimed he, as he staggered about the floor, and fell heavily. His servants,

who had been listening to all his ravings, at last dared to approach their lord, and flew to his assistance. They took him up and brought him round. "My carriage," was all he said to them; and they at once got it ready. He then drove outside the town to where the painter had told him he was living; and there Gangabai, who had rightly expected her husband to come to her directly he saw the pictures, was waiting to receive him. They flew into each other's arms.

"I have at last found my lost gem, and never again while I live shall I lose it in the forest!" said the prince; "God has given me back my lost gem!"

The princess only replied by her tears, for she could not open her lips. Presently, after the first excitement was over, they questioned each other as to their history during this calamitous period, and again wept over their misfortunes.

With Gangabai by his side, Thanuji now drove to the lacquered mansion, sending word to his old father that he had discovered his lost love, and was going to the forest to bring all his dear wives to Sivapuri, and that, on the day originally fixed for the wedding, he would be married to them and never to Kurudi!

Alas for Kurudi! No medicines had any effect on her. She died on the day before that appointed for her wedding, unable to bear up against her pains, external and internal. For remorse, at the torture she had inflicted on her enemy, overcame her mind before she breathed her last!

To return to the lacquered mansion. The prince met his other wives and gave them their lost sister, and returned to Sivapuri, relating stories all the way home, some of the calamities that had befallen him and Gangabai, owing to their having entertained the old woman in their palace. When they reached Sivapuri, all excepting Kurudi's mother, were happy on the marriage day, on which Thanuji, with the consent of his father, properly married all his four wives.

After the princesses had thus lived for a short period with their husband, they heard that their father was dangerously ill. So, accompanied by Thanuji, they went and visited him before his death. The father had only time to beg their pardon before he breathed his last, leaving his large kingdom to his daughters. The princesses, remembering the minister's kindness to them, gave him their kingdom, and returning home to their husband's country, lived with him for many years in peace and prosperity, during which they did not forget the kindness that Govinda and Gopi had done to Gangabai.

XIV

THE MONKEY WITH THE TOM-TOM

In a remote wood there lived a monkey, and one day while he was eating wood-apples, a sharp thorn from the tree ran into the tip of his tail. He tried his best to get it out but could not. So he proceeded to the nearest village, and calling the barber asked him to oblige him by removing the thorn.

"Friend barber," said the monkey, "a thorn has run into my tail. Kindly remove it and I will reward you."

The barber took up his razor and began to examine the tail: but as he was cutting out the thorn he cut off the tip of the tail. The monkey was greatly enraged and said—

"Friend barber, give me back my tail. If you cannot do that, give me your razor."

The barber was now in a difficulty, and as he could not replace the tip of the tail he had to give up his razor to the monkey.

The monkey, went back to the wood with his razor thus trickishly acquired. On the way he met an old woman, who was cutting fuel from a dried-up tree.

"Grandmother, grandmother," said the monkey, "the tree is very hard. You had better use this sharp razor, and you will cut your fuel easily."

The poor woman was very pleased, and took the razor from the monkey. In cutting the wood she, of course, blunted the razor, and the monkey seeing his razor thus spoiled, said—

"Grandmother, you have spoiled my razor. So you must either give me your fuel or get me a better razor."

The woman was not able to procure another razor. So she gave the monkey her fuel and returned to her house bearing no load that day.

The roguish monkey now put the bundle of dry fuel on his head and proceeded to a village to sell it. There he met an old woman seated by the roadside and making puddings. Said the monkey to her—

"Grandmother, grandmother, you are making puddings and your fuel is already exhausted. Use mine also and make more cakes."

The old lady thanked him for his kindness and used his fuel for her puddings. The cunning monkey waited till the last stick of his fuel was burnt up, and then he said to the old woman—

"Grandmother, grandmother, return me my fuel or give me all your puddings."

She was unable to return him the fuel, and so had to give him all her puddings.

The monkey with the basket of puddings on his head walked and walked till he met a *Paraiya* coming with a tom-tom towards him.

"Brother *Paraiya*," said the monkey, "I have a basketful of puddings to give you. Will you in return present me with your tom-tom?"

The *Paraiya* gladly agreed, as he was then very hungry, and had nothing with him to eat.

The monkey now ascended with the tom-tom to the topmost branch of a big tree and there beat his drum most triumphantly, saying in honour of his several tricks—

"I lost my tail and got a razor; *dum, dum*."

"I lost my razor and got a bundle of fuel; *dum, dum*."

"I lost my fuel and got a basket of puddings; *dum, dum*."

"I lost my puddings and got a tom-tom; *dum, dum*."

Thus there are rogues in this innocent world, who live to glory over their wicked tricks.

XV

GOOD WILL GROW OUT OF GOOD

In a certain town there reigned a king named Patnipriya,[1] to whose court a poor old Brahman, named Papabhiru, came every morning, with a yellow lime in his hand, and presenting it to the king, pronounced a benediction in Tamil :—

Nanmai vidaittal, nanmai vilaiyum :
Timai vidaittal, timai vilaiyum :
Nanmaiyum timaiyum pinvara kanalam.
"If good is sown, then good will grow :
If bad is sown, then bad will grow :
Thus good or bad the end will show."

The king respected as much the noble benediction of the Brahman as he did his grey hairs.

In this way the presentation of the fruit was daily continued, though the Brahman had nothing to request from the king, but simply wished to pay his respects. On observing that he had no ulterior motives, but was merely actuated by *rajasevana*, or duty to his king, the king's admiration to his old morning visitor the more increased.

After presenting the fruit the Brahman waited upon his sovereign till his *puja*[3] was over, and then went home

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1 *i.e.*, Lover of his wife.
2 *i.e.*, Shudderer at sin.
3 Worship of the household gods.

where his wife kept ready for him all the requisites for his own *puja*. Papabhiru then partook of what dinner his wife had prepared for him. Sometimes, however, a Brahman neighbour sent him an invitation to dinner, which he at once accepted. For his father, before he breathed his last, had called him to his bedside, and, pronouncing his last benediction, had thus advised him in Tamil—

"*Kalai sottai tallade,*
Kannil kandadai sollade.
Rajanukku payandu nada."
"Morning meal do thou never spurn,
Nor say thou what thine eyes discern,
But serve thy king for fame to earn."

Thus it was that Papabhiru began his visits to the king, nor did he ever reject an invitation to dinner, though it might come at a very inconvenient time.

Now on a certain *ekadasi*[4] morning, Papabhiru went to the king to pay his respects as usual, with the lime and the benediction, but found that he had gone to his *puja* and so followed him there. On seeing the Brahman, the king's face glowed with pleasure and he said :—

"My most revered god on earth,[5] I thought that some ill must have befallen you, when I missed you in the council hall this morning; but praised be Paramesvara for having sent you to me, though it is a little late. I never do my *puja* without placing my scimitar by the side of the god, but

[4] The eleventh lunar day of every fortnight, on which a fast is observed by orthodox Hindus.

[5] *bhusura*, *bhudeva*; a generic name for a Brahman.

last night I left it in my queen's room. It is under the pillow of the couch on which I usually sleep. Until you came I could find no suitable person to fetch it for me;" and so I have waited for you. Would you kindly take the trouble to fetch it for me ?"

The poor Brahman was only too glad of the opportunity thus presented to him of serving his king, and so he ran to the harem and into the room where the king usually slept.

Now, Patnipriya was very fond of his queen; but she was not faithful to him, and allowed the king's minister to pay visits to her. The most convenient time for such meetings was during the king's *puja*. Of course, the poor Brahman, Papabhiru, knew nothing of this, and when he entered the room, a shocking scene met his eyes. He closed them for horror, and lifting up the pillow, felt for the scimitar, and then turning his back on the couch, he retraced his steps, placed the sword before the king, and took his leave. True, however, to his father's last words, "Nor say thou what thine eyes discern," he never opened his lips, and went his way with a heavy heart.

The queen and her wicked visitor were greatly alarmed.

"That rogue of an old Brahman has seen us and may report us to the king at the first opportunity," faltered the minister.

But the queen, as bold in words as in sin, said: "I will have him murdered before the sun rises. Wait you here. I shall inform the king of what is to be done and report the result to you, and then you may go home."

So saying, she assumed the guise of a most chaste lady that had resisted the temptations of a wicked man, and stood before her royal husband who was at his worship. Patnipriya rose up and asked her the reason for her sudden appearance.

Said she :—" Your Majesty seems to think the whole world as innocent as yourself. That wretched old Brahman, though his hair is as white as milk, has not forgotten his younger days. Fortunately for us there were several maids by me when he approached me, and so he fled away without his vile intentions being fulfilled. If you do not order his death before to-morrow morning, I shall kill myself."

The king was much vexed with what he heard, and all the regard he had for the Brahman disappeared at once. He called two of his executioners and spoke to them thus before his wife :—

"Take to the east gate of the town a large iron caldron, and keep it boiling to the brim with gingelly oil.[6] A certain person shall come to you in the morning and ask you. 'Is it all done?' Without observing who he is, tie his hands and feet and throw him into the boiling oil. When he has been boiled to death, put out the fire and empty out the oil."

The executioners received the order and went away to perform their terrible duty. The queen, too, glad at heart at having thus successfully arranged for the murder of the Brahman, reported the fact to the Minister, but said

6 Oil of sesamum : *til* and gingelly oil are the ordinary names for this common product of India.

nothing about the special question to be put by the victim. The Minister, much pleased, went to his palace and waited for the news of the Brahman's death.

When his *puja* was over the king sent for Papabhiru, and the poor Brahman, never having before been sent for at such a time, made his appearance with a beating heart. When he arrived the king, in order to arouse no suspicion in his mind, said gently to him : "My dear Brahman, to-morrow morning, when you go to make your ablutions, pass by the east gate. There you will see two persons seated by the side of a large caldron. Ask them, 'Is it all done?' And whatever reply they give you, come and communicate to me."

Thus spoke the king, firmly believing that Papabhiru would never return to him ; while the Brahman, glad to be able to serve the king a second time next morning, went home and slept soundly. Early in the morning, even a *ghatika* before his usual time, he got up, and, placing on his head a bag containing dry clothes, proceeded to the river for his morning bath. He took the road to the eastern gate as he had been ordered, but had not walked far when a friend invited him to a *dvadasi* [7] breakfast.

"My poor old mother did not taste even a drop of water the whole of the *ekadasi*, (yesterday). Rice and hot water for a bath are ready. Pour a little of the water over

[7] *Dvadasi* is the twelfth lunar day, on which early in the morning, before even the fifth *ghatika* is over, every orthodox Hindu is obliged by his religious codes to break the previous day's fast.

your head, [8] pronounce one *gayatri*, [9] and taste a handful of rice. Whatever may be the urgency of your business, oblige me for my poor mother's sake." Thus spoke his friend, and Papabhiru, out of regard to his father's order never to spurn a morning meal, ran in haste into his friend's house to oblige him; the king's order all the while sitting heavily on his mind.

Meanwhile the Minister was most anxious to hear the news of the Brahman's death, but was afraid to send any one to inquire about it, lest he should rouse suspicion. So he went himself to the east gate, as soon as the sun had risen, and asked the executioners, sitting by the side of the caldron, by way of a simple question: 'Is the business all done?' And as they were instructed not to observe who the person was that came to question them but to tie him up and boil him in the oil, they, notwithstanding his howls, bound him and threw him in. As soon as he was dead, they extinguished the fire, poured out the oil, and turned over the caldron, corpse and all.

The Brahman finished his *dvadasi* breakfast, in great haste, and, with the betel leaf still in his hand, ran to the gate to inquire of the persons seated by the caldron whether it was all done. When he put them the question, they smilingly replied, "Yes, Sir, it is all done. The Minister is boiled to death. We gave full execution to the king's orders. You may go and report the affair to him."

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[8] Lit. a 'chombu-full': the *chombu* is a small vessel.

[9] A sacred hymn.

The Brahman, not knowing the reason for the course events had taken, ran back and reported the reply of the executioners to the king. The Minister's interference in the affair at once kindled suspicion in the king's mind. He unsheathed his scimitar, and holding it in his right hand, twisted the lock of hair on the Brahman's head into his left. He then asked him whether he had not tried to dishonour his queen the previous morning, and told him that if he concealed the truth, he would make an end of him. The poor Brahman now confessed what he had seen, on which the king threw down the scimitar and fell down on his knees before him.

"The words of thy benediction, O respected Brahman have only now been explained to me. Thou hast sown nothing but good; and good in having thy life preserved, hast thou reaped. The wicked Minister,—whose conscious guilt made him so very anxious to hear about thy death,—because he sowed a bad intention in his heart has reaped evil, even a death that he never expected. Another victim of evil sowing remains in my queen, in whom I placed an undeserved love."

So said he, and ordered her to the gallows. The old Brahman he appointed his Minister and reigned for a long time.

XVI

PRIDE GOETH BEFORE A FALL

Corresponding to this English proverb, there is one in Tamil,—*Ahambhavam alai alaikkum*, "Pride of self destroys;" and the following story is related by the common folk to illustrate it :—

In a certain village there lived ten cloth-merchants, who always went about together. Once upon a time they had travelled far afield, and were returning home with a great deal of money which they had obtained by selling their wares. Now there happened to be a dense forest near their village, and this, early one morning, they reached. In it there lived three notorious robbers, of whose existence the traders had never heard, and while they were still in the middle of it, the robbers stood before them, with swords and cudgels in their hands, and ordered them to lay down all they had. The traders had no weapons with them; and so, though they were many more in number, they had to submit themselves to the robbers, who took away everything from them, even the very clothes they wore, and gave to each only a small loin-cloth *(langoti)*, a span in breadth and a cubit in length.

The idea that they had conquered ten men, and plundered all their property, now took possession of the robbers' minds. They seated themselves like three monarchs before the men they had plundered, and ordered them to dance to them before returning home. The merchants

now mourned their fate. They had lost all they had, except their chief essential, the *langoti*, and still the robbers were not satisfied, but ordered them to dance!

There was, among the ten merchants, one who was very intelligent. He pondered over the calamity that had come upon him and his friends, the dance they would have to perform, and the magnificent manner in which the three robbers had seated themselves on the grass. At the same time he observed that these last had placed their weapons on the ground, in the assurance of having thoroughly cowed the traders, who were now commencing to dance So he took the lead in the dance, and, as a song is always sung by the leader on such occasions, to which the rest keep time by hands and feet, he thus began to sing :—

Namanum puli per,
Talanum tiru per:
Savana talanai
Tiruvanan suttinan,
Savana talan midi.
Ta tai tom tadingana.
"We are *puli* men,
They are *tiru* men:
If one *sa* man,
Surrounds *tiru* men,
Sa man remains.
Ta, tai, tom, tadingana."

The robbers were all uneducated, and thought that the leader was merely singing a song as usual. So it was in one

sense; for the leader commenced from a distance, and had sung the song over twice, before he and his companions commenced to approach the robbers. They had understood his meaning, which however, even to the best educated, unless trained to the technical expressions of trade, would have remained a riddle.

When two traders discuss the price of an article in the presence of a purchaser, they use an enigmatic form of language. "What is the price of this cloth?" one trader will ask another. "*Puli* rupees," another will reply, meaning "ten rupees." Thus, there is no possibility of the purchaser knowing what is meant unless he be acquainted with trade technicalities.[1] By the rules of this secret language *tiru* means 'three,' *puli* means 'ten,' and *savana* (or shortly *sa*) means 'one.' So the leader by his song meant to hint to his fellow-traders that they were ten men, the robbers only three, that if three pounced upon each of the robbers, nine of them could hold them down, while the remaining one bound the robbers' hands and feet.

The three thieves, glorying in their victory, and little understanding the meaning of the song and the intentions of the dancers, were proudly seated chewing betel and *tambak* (tobacco). Meanwhile the song was sung a third time. *Ta tai tom* had left the lips of the singer; and, before *tadingana* was out of them, the traders separated into parties of three, and each party pounced upon a thief. The remaining one—the leader himself, for to him the other nine left the conclusion—tore up into long narrow strips a large piece of cloth six cubits long, and tied the hands and

1 Traders have also certain secret symbols for marking their prices on their cloths.

feet of the robbers. These were entirely humbled now, and rolled on the ground like three bags of rice!

The ten traders now took back all their property, and armed themselves with the swords and cudgels of their enemies; and when they reached their village, they often amused their friends and relatives by relating their adventure.[2]

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[2] [This story, apart from its folklore value, is specially interesting as showing that the customs mentioned, *Ind. Antiquary* Vol. XIV p. 155 ff., as being prevalent at Delhi, regarding secret trade language are universal in India.—R. C. Temple.]

XVII

LIGHT MAKES PROSPERITY

There is a Tamil proverb *dipam lakshmikaram*, meaning, "light makes prosperity," and the following story is related to explain it :—

In the town of Govindapathi there lived a merchant named Pasupati Setti, who had a son and a daughter. The son's name was Vinita and the daughter's Garvi, and while still playmates they made a mutual vow, that in case they ever had children that could be married together, they would certainly see that this was done. Garvi grew up to marry a very rich merchant, and gave birth in due course to three daughters, the last of whom was named Suguni. Vinita, too, had three sons. Before, however, this brother and sister could fulfil their vow an event happened which threw a gloom over all their expectations.

Pasupati Setti died, and his creditors—for he had many—grew troublesome. All his property had to be sold to clear his debts, and in a month or two after his father's death Vinita was reduced to the condition of a penniless pauper. But being a sensible person he patiently bore up against his calamity, and tried his best to live an honest life on what little was left to him.

His sister Garvi, was, as has been already said, married into a rich family, and when she saw the penniless condition of her brother the engagements she had entered into with him began to trouble her. To give or not to give

her daughters in marriage to the sons of her brother! This was the question that occupied her thoughts for several months, till at last she determined within herself never to give poor husbands to her children. Fortunately for her two young merchants of respectable family offered themselves to her two eldest daughters, she gladly accepted them and had the weddings celebrated. The last daughter, Suguni, alone remained unmarried.

Vinita was sorely troubled in his heart at this disappointment, as he never thought that his sister would thus look down upon his poverty; but, being very sensible, he never interfered and never said a word. The vow of his childhood was, however, known to every one, and some came to sympathise with him; while others spoke in a criticising tone to Garvi for having broken her promise, because her brother had become poor through unforeseen circumstances. Their remarks fell on the ears of Suguni, who was as yet unmarried, and also was a very learned and sensible girl. She found her uncle Vinita extremely courteous and respectful, and his sons all persons of virtue and good nature. The thought that her mother should have forgotten all these excellent and rare qualities in the presence of fleeting mammon *(asthiraisvarya)* vexed her heart very greatly. So, though it is considered most disrespectful for a girl in Hindu society to fix upon a boy as her husband, she approached her mother and thus addressed her:—

"Mother, I have heard all the story about your vow to your brother to marry us—myself and my sisters—to his sons, our cousins. But I am ashamed to see that you have unwarrantably broken it in the case of my sisters.

I cannot bear with such shame. I cannot marry any one in the world except one of my three cousins. You must make up your mind to give me your consent."

Garvi was astonished to hear her youngest daughter talk thus to her :

"You wish to marry a beggar?" said she. "We will never agree to it, and if you persist we will give you away to your penniless pauper, but we will never see your face again."

But Suguni persisted. So her marriage with the youngest son of Vinita was arranged. He had never spoken a word about it to his sister, but he had waited to make matches for his children till all his sister's daughters had been given away, and when he heard that Suguni was determined to marry his youngest son, he was much pleased. He soon fixed upon two girls from a poor family for his other sons, and celebrated the three weddings as became his position.

Suguni was as noble in her conduct as in her love for her poor cousin. She was never proud or insolent on account of having come from a rich family. Nor did she ever disregard her husband, or his brothers, or father.

Now Vinita and his sons used to go out in the mornings to gather dried leaves which his three daughters-in-law stitched into plates (*patravali*), which the male members of the family sold in the *bazar* for about four *panams* each. Sometimes these leaf-plates would go for more, sometimes for less: but whatever money the father-in-law brought home his daughters-in-law used for the day's

expense. The youngest of them was Suguni, who spent the money most judiciously and fed her father-in-law and his sons sumptuously. Whatever remained she partook of with her two poor sisters-in-law, and lived most contentedly. And the family respected Suguni as a paragon of virtue, and had a very great regard for her. Her parents, as they had threatened, never returned to see how their last, and of course once beloved, child was doing in her husband's home. Thus passed a couple of years.

One day the king of the town was taking an oil bath, and pulling a ring off his finger, left it in a niche in the open courtyard. A *garuda* (Brahmani kite) was at that moment describing circles in the air and, mistaking the glittering rubies in the ring for flesh, pounced upon it and flew away. Finding it to be no flesh he dropped it in the house of Suguni's husband. She happened to be alone working in the courtyard, while her sisters-in-law and the others were in different parts of the house. So she took up the sparkling ring and hid it in her lap.

Soon afterwards she heard a proclamation made in the street that the king had lost a valuable ring, and that any person who could trace it and give it back to him should obtain a great reward. Suguni called her husband and his brothers and thus addressed them :—

"My lord and brothers, kindly excuse me for having the king's ring. Exactly at midday a *garuda* dropped it in our courtyard and here it is. We must all go to the king, and there, before you three, I shall deliver up the ring, explaining how I got it. When His Majesty desires me to name my reward I shall do so, and beg of you never to

contradict or gainsay my desires, if they appear very humble in your opinion."

The brothers agreed, and they all started to the palace. They had a very great respect for Suguni, and expected a good result from this visit to the king.

The palace was reached, and the ring was given back to the king with the explanation. His Majesty was charmed at the modesty and truthfulness of Suguni, and asked her to name her reward.

"My most gracious Sovereign! King of kings! Supreme lord! Only a slight favour thy dog of a servant requests of your Majesty. It is this, that on a Friday night all the lights in the town be extinguished, and not a lamp be lit even in the palace. Only the house of thy dog of a servant must be lighted up with such lights as it can afford."

"Agreed, most modest lady. We grant your request, and we permit you to have the privilege you desire this very next Friday."

Joyfully she bowed before his Majesty and returned with her husband and the others to her house. She then pledged the last jewel she had by her and procured some money.

Friday came. She fasted the whole day, and as soon as twilight approached she called both the brothers of her husband, and thus addressed them:—

"My brothers, I have made arrangements for lighting up our house with one thousand lamps to-night. One of you without ever closing your eyes for a moment must

watch the front of our house and the other the back. If a woman of a graceful appearance and of feminine majesty wishes you to permit her to enter it, boldly tell her to swear first never to go out again. If she solemnly agrees to this, then permit her to come in. If in the same way any woman wishes to go out, make a similar condition that she must swear never to return at any time in her life."

What Suguni said seemed ridiculous to the brothers; but they allowed her to have her way, and waited to see patiently what would take place.

The whole town was gloomy that night, except Suguni's house: for, by order of his Majesty, no light was lit in any other house. The *Ashtalakshmis*—the Eight Prosperities—entered the town that night and went house by house into every street. All of them were dark, and the only house lit up was Suguni's. They tried to enter it, but the brother at the door stopped them and ordered them to take the oath. This they did, and when he came to understand that these ladies were the Eight Prosperities—he admired the sagacity of his brother's wife.

A *nimisha* after the eight ladies had gone in there came out of the house a hideous female and requested permission to go, but the brother at the back would not permit this unless she swore never to come back again. She solemnly swore, and the next moment he came to know that she was the *Mudevi*, or Adversity, the elder sister of Prosperity.

For she said: "My sisters have come. I cannot stay here for a minute longer. God bless you and your people. I swear by everything sacred never to come back."

And so, unable to breathe there any longer, Adversity ran away.

When the morning dawned, the Prosperities had already taken up a permanent abode with the family. The rice bag became filled. The cash chest overflowed with money. The pot contained milk. And thus plenty began to reign in Suguni's house from that day. The three brothers and her father-in-law were overjoyed at the way Suguni had driven away their poverty for ever, and even Suguni's parents did not feel it a disgrace to come and beg their daughter's pardon. She nobly granted it and lived with all the members of her family in prosperity for a long life.

It is a notion, therefore, among orthodox Hindus, that light in the house brings prosperity, and darkness adversity.

XVIII

THE FIVE CUPS

In a certain village there lived an extremely poor Brahman, named Bhikshu, who had nothing to live upon. Every morning he rose in the *Brahmamuhurta*[1] from his bed, went to the river, bathed, and finished his prayers by the third or fourth *ghatika* of the day. After this his wife gave him a copper vessel cleaned and washed, which he used to take in his hand and go a-begging street by street, and house by house, reciting the *Upanishads*.[2] At about the tenth *ghatika* Bhikshu used to return home with the vessel filled with rice and a few vegetables with which the charitably disposed had presented him. He then performed his noonday ablutions and the *devatarchana*—the worship of his household gods. His wife cooked the rice meanwhile, and after each platter had been duly offered to the god, Bhikshu sat down to his dinner. Whatever remained after serving her husband the Brahmani ate. Such was their daily routine. If fortunately Bhikshu ever brought more rice than was sufficient for one meal for himself and his wife, the hearth glowed a second time with fire, and a second meal was cooked. If not, they had to be content with a single meal for the day, and passed their night in hunger and in sorrowing over their poverty.

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[1] *Brahmamuhurta*, the second half of the last watch of a night, from 4 to 6 A.M., so called as being sacred to Brahman.

[2] *Upanishads*, sacred writings of the Brahmans, explained the true sense of the *Vedas*.

This kind of life went on for several years till one day Bhikshu's wife was much vexed, and calling her husband to her side thus addressed him :—

"My dearest Bhikshu, we have remained in this misery so long that death seems more welcome to us than life. But the great god Mahesvara will not take us to his abode, until the full punishment for all our sins committed in a former life is duly undergone in this life in the shape of extreme poverty. And as for yourself you never cared to learn anything by which to gain an honourable livelihood. The only thing you seem to have studied in your younger days was *unchchhavritti*—the collection of alms! I beseech you to go somewhere and return with some learning in you."

The Brahmani's words infused shame into her husband, and he resolved within himself to start the next morning in search of some knowledge to eke out honourably the remainder of his life. His wife, too, did not cook all the rice he got that day, but reserved a portion to give to him for the way.

Early next day when Bhikshu went for his bath—for Brahmanism is lost if the morning bath and ablution are renounced for a day even—his wife rose up and bathing hastily in the well in her garden, cooked the remaining rice and made ready a small bundle of food for her husband's use. When Bhikshu came back he smiled upon his wife for her kindness, and passing his left-hand under the bundle placed it firmly on his left shoulder. His wife then ran out before him to see whether the omen was good. An old lady with a *ghata* (pot) full of newly drawn water was coming towards her.

"My dear husband, the great god favours your journey. A *sumangali*[3] approaches. Start at once," cried she, and off went her husband.

Bhikshu had to go through a pathless forest to find some strange country in his search after knowledge. The scorching sun was too much for him, and he was greatly tired; but though his hunger was great he did not mind. He walked and walked, till he came to the banks of a dry river bed in one part of which however, a small stream was flowing gently. His fatigue was so great that he took the bundle off his shoulder, and after hanging it on the branch of an *ingudi*[4] tree fell into a deep slumber beneath it.

Fortunately for him, while he was thus sound asleep, Parvati and Paramesvara happened to pass that way. The goddess was very hungry. Said she to her lord:

"My great lord, here sleeps a poor Brahman. The rice he brought for his meal is hanging in the *ingudi* tree. I am very hungry. Let us both eat of the bundle and then pursue our way."

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[3] A married woman, whose approach is a good omen. Omens differ in different countries: among the Dravidians the good omens are—a married woman, virgin, dancing-woman, "double" Brahman, music, flowers, fruits, flag, umbrella, sugar-cane, cooked rice, milk, flesh, fire, toddy, elephant, horse, cows, cloth, king, pearls, clarified rice (*akshata*) and fried rice (*laja*). If any of these approach the omen is supposed to be good and the purpose for which one goes out will succeed. The bad omens are a widow, "single" Brahman, three Vaisyas, two Sudras, tiger, serpent, fuel, scythe, wood-axe, crowbar, oil, new pot, a man in a masque, butter-milk (*chach*) curds, a cough, any utterance of a preventive nature, untimely rain, thunder, wind, fasting person, person with his head newly shaved, sorrowful exclamations of *Ha! Hada!* &c.

[4] (*Terminalia catappa*), a tree that grows in marshy places and by the side of rivers; always described by Sanskrit poets in wild scenes; it occurs in the *Ramayana*, *Sakuntala* and other works.

The great god could not but agree. He himself took down the bundle and went up to the flowing stream. Parvati followed and they both ate their fill and came back, while Bhikshu was still asleep.

"Poor soul, he sleeps soundly enough, without knowing that we have emptied his bundle of rice. What will he do for his meal when he gets up?" said Parvati, and the great god, asking her not to be concerned about it, took five gold cups from under his feet, and tied them up in the empty cloth. The goddess's face glowed with joy and she hung the bundle with the five cups in it where the bundle of rice had been, and went behind her lord to Mount Kailasa. [5]

In the evening Bhikshu awoke, and there were only five or six *ghatikas* remaining before the sun would set. He snatched down his bundle hastily and flew to the stream. It felt a little heavier, and not knowing how to account for this he opened it, when lo! five cups made of gold and arranged one over another met his eyes. As he separated the cups, from out of each there came out a being of the Divine World (*devaloka*), and served him with a thousand varieties of dishes. He was delighted at what he saw, and at once interpreted it to be a divine gift. When he put the cups back into their original position the goddesses disappeared, and he thought within himself that his poverty must have left him from that moment, and returned home hastily with a cheerful countenance to meet his wife.

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5 The abode of *Siva* in the *Himalayas*.

Alas, poor woman ! She had given away the little rice she had that morning to her husband, when she sent him on his expedition in search of knowledge, and as there was no one to give her another handful she had fasted the whole night, and was praying for death or the return of her lord to put an end to her miseries. At about the seventh *ghatika*—for it took this much time for her husband to reach home—a couple of taps were heard at the door accompanied by "*Adiye*—O lady"—and she ran at once to open the latch, for she recognised the voice to be her lord's. A small light from a thin single wick was burning in her left hand, while with her right hand she opened the latch and she discovered her husband standing with a cheerful face at the gate.

"Has my lord returned so soon ?" said she.

"Yes, my lady. The gift of Paramesvara has been so great," replied Bhikshu, and after carefully bolting the door, he went in, followed by his wife.

He then related to her how Paramesvara had conferred upon him five gold cups of extraordinary merit, and to prove that what he told her was not untrue, he fed her by means of the newly acquired vessels. She was extremely delighted at the divine favour which had thus dawned upon her, and in honour of it wished to give a public feast to the villagers. Bhikshu agreed to the idea and was much pleased at the charitable disposition of his wife. And then they had nothing to lose by it, for the cups would feed any number of persons ! So Bhikshu undertook to invite in the morning all the males of the village and orderd his wife to invite all the females.

Accordingly, after his morning duties were over, Bhikshu went to all the houses and invited the male inhabitants of the village to a dinner at his house, and his wife invited all the members of the fair sex. But they were amazed to hear that he was to give them all a dinner!

"How could a beggar do such a thing?" said they, "but if we do not go he may think that we have insulted his poverty. So we must go for form's sake, after dining at home."

In this way they all duly came to Bhikshu's house, and seeing no signs of cooking or of a dinner in the place, they were all glad of having eaten first in their own homes.

Bhikshu received all the male guests and seated them in their proper places, while his wife received and arranged for all the female guests. When the arrangements were complete Bhikshu went inside and opened his bundle of five cups and separated them. Several divine damsels came out from each cup, highly ornamented. Wreaths of sweet-scented jasmines were entwined in their coiled locks, and each had a dish in her hand. The first lady spread the leaves. The second sprinkled water and placed a *lota*[6] by the side of each guest, while the others served the contents of their platters into the leaves of the guests. It was a most charming sight to see this bevy of fair maidens at their work, until the whole party was served. Foolish guests, they were not prepared to eat, for they had eaten their fill at home. So, after enjoying the sight more than their meal they all returned home, congratulating Bhikshu on this manifestation of the divine favour.

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6 A drinking cup with a neck smaller than its body.

Now there was a rich land-holder in the village, who was notorious for his ambition for anything and everything, whose name was Asavan. He came to Bhikshu and requested him to give full particulars as to how he had obtained the cups. Bhikshu related to him the whole story to which Asavan listened quite unconcernedly, and went his way. He then ordered his wife to give him some food tied up in a bundle and started with it next morning to the *ingudi* tree. There he suspended his rice, as Bhikshu had done, and pretended to sleep, but only kept his eyes closed. That day, too, Parvati and Paramesvara passed that way and ate of his bundle. On returning to the bank the great god placed five cups also in Asavan's bundle, as he had done in Bhikshu's. Asavan observed all that had passed and was delighted at the divine favour. He did not even open his bundle, but came running home.

His great idea now was to invite all the villagers and give them a grand feast before he himself tested the boon. Accordingly the whole village was called in the next morning, and all came hungry, and sat in a row to taste of the divine dishes. Asavan treated them courteously and going inside opened the cups. When lo! several barbers came out of each cup and shaved the guests clean! And as they were divine the guests could not get out ot their clutches, and one and all left the house cursing Asavan!

XIX

THE BRAHMARAKSHASA

In a certain village of the country of Sengalinirpattu[1] there dwelt a Brahman, gaining his living by the alms he collected daily, and so he was in extremely poor circumstances. Poverty indeed had taken such a firm hold of him that he wished to fly to Benares. Accordingly, depending as usual upon what charity would provide for him on the way, he started with only one day's supplies tied up in a bundle.

When there wanted yet four *ghatikas* before sunset he had approached a thick wilderness, which was also long and wide, and studded with small villages here and there. After journeying through this for more than the four *ghatikas* he reached a splendid tank just as the sun was setting. Ablutions must never be foregone by a Brahman, so he neared the tank to wash his hands and legs, to perform his prayers, and to eat what little his bundle contained. As soon as he placed his foot in the water he heard a voice calling out:—"Put not thy foot in this water! Thou art not permitted to do so!"

He looked round about him and discovered nothing, and so not heeding the threat he washed his hands and feet, and sat down to perform his *sandhyavandana* or evening worship, when again he heard a voice:—"Perform not thy *sandhyavandana*! Thou art not permitted to do so!"

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1 Sengalinirpattu means "the land of the blue lily," now corrupted into Chingleput.

A second time he gave no heed to the voice but proceeded with his prayers, and when they were over opened his bundle of food. As soon as he began to eat the same voice was again heard, but the Brahman paid no attention, and finished his meal. Then getting up he pursued his journey, so as, if possible, to reach a village to sleep in for the night. He had scarcely advanced a step, when again the same voice forbade him to go on ?

Having thus been barred four times the Brahman boldly broke out and said:—"Who art thou, thou wretch? And why dost thou thus forbid me every reasonable action?"

Replied a voice from a pipal tree above him: "I am a *Brahmarakshasa*, named Ganapriya.[2] In my former life I was a Brahman, and learnt all the intricacies of music, but I was unwilling to impart my hard-earned knowledge to others. Paramesvara was so greatly displeased with me that he made me a *Brahmarakshasa in this life*[3] and even now his rage seems not to have been appeased. At the distance of a quarter of a *ghatika* from this spot is a ruined temple, in which *puja* (worship) is conducted in a very rough way, and during the ceremony a piper plays upon a *nagasvara* pipe so very awkwardly, that it causes me the utmost mortification to listen to him. My only hope of escape is that a Brahman will rescue me from this tree. You are the first Brahman I have ever met with in this

[2] This means merely "lover of music."

[3] It is a common notion among Hindus, especially among Brahmans, that he who does not freely impart his knowledge to others is born in the next life as a kind of demon called *Brahmarakshasa*.

wilderness, and I have grown quite thin from the worry of hearing that awkward piper day after day! If I continue much longer in this tree, it will be the death of me! So pity my condition, I beseech you, and remove me to some tree five or six *ghatikas'* distance from this place, and leave me in peace there, so that I may be out of the reach of that horrible piper and get a little stouter. In return demand from me any boon and I will grant it."

Thus said the *Brahmarakshasa*, and in its very voice the Brahman could discover its failing strength. Said he:—"I am an extremely poor Brahman, and if you promise to mend my condition and to make me rich I will remove you to a good distance, where the sound of the cracked *nagasvara* shall never affect your ears."

The *Brahmarakshasa* thought for a few *nimishas* and thus replied:—"Holy Brahman, every person must undergo what is cut upon his forehead by Brahma, in this world. Five more years of poverty are allotted to you by fate, after which I shall go and possess the Princess of Mysore, and none of the incantations which learned magicians may pronounce upon me shall drive me out, until you have presented yourself before the king of Mysore and promised to cure her of me. He will promise you ample rewards, and you must commence the cure, when I will leave her. The king will be pleased and grant you several boons, which will make you happy. But you must never afterwards visit any place where I may be. It may be that I shall possess several princesses, but if you come there with the view of curing them I shall take your life at a blow. Beware!"

Thus spake the *Brahmarakshasa*, and the Brahman agreed to all the conditions and removed it to another *pipal* tree seven *ghatikas*[1] distant from its then abode. It found its new home comfortable, and let the Brahman pursue his way north to Benares, which he reached in six months.

For five years he lived in the Hanumanta Ghatta at Benares, performing ablutions to wash himself pure of all his sins. Then, thinking of the *Brahmarakshasa's* promise, he returned towards the south, and after travelling for five months reached Mysore, where he sojourned in an old woman's house and enquired the news of the day.

Said she:—" My son, the princess of this country, who is the only daughter of the king, has been possessed by a furious devil for the last five months and all the exorcists of Jambudvipa have tried their skill on her, but to no purpose. He who cures her will become the master of a vast fortune."

So said the old woman to the secret joy of the Brahman at the faithful observance of its promise by the *Brahmarakshasa*. He bathed and hastily took his meal, and then presented himself at the *darbar* that very day. The king promised him several villages and whole elephant-loads of *mohars* should he effect a cure.

On these conditions he commenced his pretended exorcisms, and on the third day asked all the persons assembled to vacate the room in which the possessed princess was seated. Then he explained to his friend the *Brahmarakshasa*, who was now possessing her, that he was the Brahman who had assisted him in the wood five years previously. The demon was greatly pleased to meet its old

friend again, and wishing him prosperity and warning him never to come again to any other place where it might go for shelter, took its leave. The princess came back to her former self, and the Brahman, loaded with wealth and lands, settled down in Mysore.

He had thus earned a name as an exorcist, and now cultivated that science secretly, so that he soon became a master of it, and all over the country he became famous as a master-magician. He also became a favourite with the king of Mysore, and married a beautiful Brahmani girl by whom he became the father of three children. Thus passed full ten years.

Meanwhile the *Brahmarakshasa*, after going to several places, went to the country of Tiruvanandapuram (Trivandrum) and possessed the Princess of Travancore. Many masters of magic were called in, but to no effect. At length rumours about the master-magician of Mysore reached the ears of the king of Tiruvanandapuram. He at once wrote to the Maharaja of Mysore, who showed the letter to the Brahman. The invitation was a death stroke to our hero; for if he refused to go he would lose his good name and the favour of his king, and if he went he would lose his life! He preferred the latter alternative, and at once wrote out a *will*, leaving his estate to his children and confiding them to careful hands. He then, started from Mysore for Tiruvanandapuram, which he reached after journeying for a month. The king had so arranged for his comfort that he performed the journey with apparent ease: but his heart beating painfully!

He reached Tiruvanandapuram and tried to postpone his exorcisms for this reason or that for a short time, but

the king was determined to prove him. So he was asked to leave no stone unturned in order to effect the perfect cure of the princess. He had now no hope in this world, and thinking that his days were numbered he undertook the cure. As usual he made a pretence for a few days with his incantations, but he thought: "After all, what is the use of my thus prolonging my miseries, as it is settled that I must die? The sooner there is an end to them the better!" So with a determined will to fall before the blow of the *Brahmarakshasa* he entered the chamber in which the princess was seated, but just as he entered a thought came into his mind and he said boldly:—"Will you now abandon her, you *Brahmarakshasa*, or shall I at once bring in the piper of the ruined temple near the wood, who is waiting outside?"

No sooner had the name of the awkward piper fallen on the ears of the *Brahmarakshasa*, than he threw down the long pole, which he had in his hand to thrash the Brahman with, and fell at his feet, saying:—

"Brother Brahman, I will never even look back, but run away at once, if you will only never bring that piper to me again!"

"Agreed," said our hero, and Ganapriya, disappeared.

Of course, our hero was greatly rewarded for his success and became doubly famous throughout the world as a master-magician.

XX

THE SATCHEL-BEARER

Once upon a time, in the city of Pushpapura, there lived an office-messenger named Tan Singh. His pay was only seven rupees a month, out of which he spent five rupees for his maintenance and saved the rest. After five years, he counted his savings and found that they amounted to only Rs. 120. Counting the money over and over again, more than twenty times, Tan Singh could make no more of it than Rs. 120 ; and so he fell into a reverie and said to himself :—

" Alas ! after five years work I have been able to save only Rs. 120. What can this sum procure me ? Is it enough to buy me a good house to live in ? No ! Can I marry on it ? No ! I must serve another five years at least and save as much again to buy me even a small hut ! And as for a fair wife, I must at least have five or six hundred rupees, and to save that I must serve for more than twenty or thirty years ! By that time I may be dead ; so I must think of something else to do than leading so petty a life as this. They say that Tavudu Setti began ten years ago with the very small sum of ten rupees to trade in husks ; and he is already a " Navakoti Narayana Setti," owning big shops and half-a-dozen ships. I have twelve times as much as he had when he started in life. Why should not fortune favour me, too ?"

With these thoughts in his head, Tan Singh resigned his post and, committing himself to fortune, opened a petty *bazar* for the buying and selling of husks like Tavudu Setti. During the next year, after very careful trading, he was able to double his capital, and with his Rs. 250 he

changed his husk *bazar* into a *bazar* for nuts and betel-leaves. After his second year his capital reached Rs. 500, and he soon changed his betel-leaf *bazar* into a sweetmeat one. Now sweetmeats in South India will bring in five or six times the sum laid out on them if the trader does not give credit. Tan Singh was very careful, and before the third year was quite over he had saved more than 3,000 rupees. He now thought that fortune was really favouring him as it had favoured Tavudu Setti. Every year he changed his trade into a more and more lucrative and honourable one. He was very careful and honest, and never forgot his original poor condition. After ten years of successful trading he reached his ambition of becoming a "Navakoti Narayana Setti," for he was now a great pearl merchant. Pearls and diamonds of the first water were his only articles of commerce. What was his condition now compared with that ten years before? Then he was only a messenger on seven rupees a month: now he had more than a hundred messengers, to each of whom he was paying a monthly salary of seven rupees! Besides, his income now was more than that of a king!

Tan Singh thought that it would be a great sin in him if he did not enjoy his life, so he at once bought a large establishment at Pushpapura for Rs. 60,000, and married a lady, named Kamalabai, of the best Singh family of the town. His business never failed him, and his wife's star,[1] too, favoured his trade, for he grew richer and richer every day. Two years after his marriage he had a son, his first born, who was very beautiful. He named him Ram Singh, and brought him up very tenderly. Three years

1 It is a common belief, that when good or bad days come upon a family after taking in a new bride, it is her star that has brought them.

after that he had another son, whom he named Lakshmana Singh; and in two years more he had a third son, the most beautiful of them all, whom he named Krishna Singh. Thus, after seven years of married life, he was the father of three most beautiful sons, the eldest of whom was five years of age.

Being a rich and prudent man, he left no stone unturned to give a proper training to his sons; but, true to the proverb[2] that "the eldest is always stupid," Ram Singh was hopelessly dull. No amount of teaching had any effect on him, and his masters were not sparing of the rod. The *maulavi*, the *pandit*, the *upadhyayar*, and others came in their turn and spared no pains. But nothing had any effect on Ram Singh, who grew up a dandy, dressing like a king, eating like a glutton, and affecting loose and misguided society. Lakshmana Singh was of a different mould; not very intelligent, but very hard-working; and, with the moderate brains that Paramesvara had given him, he progressed fairly with his studies. In the youngest son the teachers found quite a student. He displayed extraordinary intelligence, grasped everything at the first teaching, and gave very great satisfaction alike to his masters and his parents. The latter were extremely fond of him, as he was their youngest and so full of promise.

In this way they went on with their studies till Ram Singh had reached the age of eighteen, while Lakshmana Singh was fifteen and Krishna Singh thirteen: when a most unfortunate event occurred to the family.

Tan Singh one morning, after twenty years of married and prosperous life, bethought him of his former misery

[2] There is a Tamil proverb, "*Muttadu muttanna*,"—the first is stupid.

and his present happiness; and calling to Kamalabai, his wife, told her to give each of the boys a hundred rupees to be spent on a feast. Kamalabai accordingly gave Ram Singh his portion as soon as he returned from his morning walk, telling him that it was his father's present. He took it eagerly, without even inquiring what it was for, made a breakfast of cold rice, and then went into a dancing-girl's house and there made a present of it to her. Soon after Ram Singh had left the house, Lakshmana Singh came home from his teachers to have his breakfast of cold rice, and as he was sitting in front of his leaf, his mother gave him the money; and when he asked her why, she told him that it was for a feast. Lakshmana gladly received it, but spent it on books and clothes. Krishna Singh was always late for his meals, and when he returned home long after the others, his mother gave him his portion, while he was eating his cold rice, telling him that it was for a feast. Krishna Singh laughed at the idea of spending one hundred rupees in one day on a feast, and rebuked his mother for having brought the money to him, although his father had given it. He thought it very silly of his father to have thought of giving Rs. 300 in a day to his sons to be spent on such stuff. At that rate he would spend Rs. 9,000 in a month, and become a beggar in a year or two.

So he asked his mother to return the money to his father, request him to lock it up in his safe and devote it to some useful purpose. His mother returned it accordingly, and his father, overjoyed at the wit of his youngest son, desired the gift to be doubled. The boy persisted in his refusal, but his father would not yield, and tried to compel him to take the money. He sternly refused, however, and when his father wished to know what it was that

made him, always so obedient, so very stubborn that day, he advised him not to attempt to find out impossibilities. Tan Singh grew extremely angry at this, and blinded by his pride of wealth, asked Krishna Singh whether anything was impossible to him in the world. Krishna Singh laughed at the folly of his father, and replied in the affirmative. Tan Singh then asked him to prove it, whereupon the boy asked his father whether it was possible for him to get his son married to the princess of Pushpapura. Not that he hoped to become the son-in-law of the king: he only brought this forward as an example of a thing that it was not in the power of his father to perform. No sooner did Tan Singh hear his son mention the princess, than he thought that he was really in love with her, and that too at so tender an age as thirteen! He pulled off his slippers at once, and severely thrashed him. Krishna Singh took the insult coolly, and then plucking the slippers out of his father's hands, fled away with the swiftness of a kite. He lingered in the city without meeting any of his friends or relatives till it grew dark, and in the night went unobserved by any-one to the temple of Kali.[3] There he chose a suitable niche in one of the *prakara*[4] walls, and placing the slippers that his father had beaten him with in it, covered them up with *chunam* (mortar), and thus left them there in safety.

He did not now wish to remain in Pushpapura any longer;—and, young and tender as he was, he did not fear to go to some other town, and there try his fortune in an independent life. In this way Krishna Singh left the city that very night, and proceeded to the North without

[3] Village goddess.

[4] Circuit walls of a temple.

knowing where he was going to and without any premeditated plans, and committing himself solely to fortune. He walked till his feet pained him, ate what he could procure in the shape of roots and fruits, slept when he felt himself drowsy, and put no value on his life. Thus he journeyed through forests, mountains, deserts, and wilds for over a month till he reached a large city, which, on enquiry, he found to be Dharapura, the capital of the Emperor or *Ekachakradhipati*,[5] to whom all the fifty-six[6] kings of the world did homage.

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[5] The lord of one discus—a title which emperors in India always took from their privilege of wielding a discus (*chakra*), which privilege the minor kings had not.

[6] The fifty-six kings of the world, according to the ideas current in South India, are the kings of

1. Anga.
2. Aruna.
3. Avanti.
4. Andira.
5. Ilada (Lata).
6. Ottiya.
7. Karusa.
8. Kalinga.
9. Kannada.
10. Kannada.
11. Kasa.
12. Kasumira (Kashmir).
13. Kandhara.
14. Kamboja.
15. Kidara.
16. Kuruku.
17. Kudaka.
18. Kuntala.
19. Kuru.
20. Kulinda.
21. Kurchchara.
22. Kekaya.
23. Kerala.
24. Kongana.
25. Kolla.
26. Kosala.
27. Saka.
28. Savvira.
29. Salava.
30. Singala.
31. Sindhu.
32. Sina.
33. Surasena.
34. Sola.
35. Sonaka.
36. Diravida.
37. Tuluva.
38. Tengana.
39. Nidada.
40. Nepala.
41. Pappara.
42. Pallava.
43. Panchala.
44. Pandiya.
45. Pulinda.
46. Poda.
47. Maghada.
48. Machcha.
49. Marata.
50. Malaiyala.
51. Malava.
52. Yavana.
53. Yuganda.
54. Vanga.
55. Vaṅgala.
56. Vidarbha.

Now the Emperor of Dharapura had no son, but an only daughter, who was considered to be the most beautiful princess in the world. Her name was Chandramukhi.[7] She was only nine years of age, and was prosecuting her studies in the Prince's College of Dharapura. This Rajakumar, or Royal College, was an institution specially adapted to the education of the members of the royal family, and during the school hours a body-guard always waited outside it and also accompanied the princess and her fellow-students to and fro; the Minister's son, Ramachandra, the Commander-in-chief's son, and several other lads of noble parentage were her school-mates.

It so happened that Krishna Singh had to pass by the street in which the college was situated, and as one of the royal guard was a Singh by caste he recognised him as a caste-fellow; and pitying the forlorn condition of such a beautiful and tender boy he called him to his side, and asked him who he was. Krishna Singh, pretending to be an idiot, replied that he knew nothing about himself, that he had been wandering ever since he could remember, and that he had no relatives. At that moment Princess Chandramukhi happened to come outside the college for a cup of water, and was struck with the beauty and majesty of Krishna Singh, worn out and disfigured though he was after his wanderings. She asked him his name and parentage. He replied to the first question, and as to the second he said he knew nothing about himself, except that he was an orphan. She then asked him whether he would like to serve under her. On his replying in the affirmative she appointed him as her *Tukkuttukki* or Satchel-bearer, and told him that his duty was ever to be by her side and to

[7] The moon-faced.

carry her satchel behind her, both when she went to the school and when she returned home. She promised in return to feed him and bring him up as well as herself. What more could Krishna Singh want? He gladly consented, and accepting her offer with thanks followed her to her class, and ever afterwards attended upon her.

The princess obtained her father's consent, too, for Krishna Singh's employment as her satchel-bearer, and true to her word she brought him up very tenderly. He had his meals side by side with her, and, excepting that he was her satchel-bearer, there was no difference made between them. The general opinion among the people was that the emperor allowed such familiarity between his daughter and Krishna Singh, because he wished to marry them to each other when they were old enough; but, as they were also of opinion that he was a very stupid boy they could not reconcile themselves to the idea of the marriage. For it should be said that Krishna Singh had, ever since he had entered the service of the princess, pretended that he was a fool, and when one of the princess's school-mates had asked him if he could write he had replied he could,—but about as well as he could fly in the air! This too was not the only instance. On several occasions he behaved purposely so foolishly that every one that knew him thought him the silliest boy that had ever lived in the world. The princess also thought him so, but never lessened her care for him on that account, and continued on the most intimate terms with him: so much so that the public began to whisper now and then that she intended to marry him. To her credit, however, it must be said that she had no such intention. Had Krishna Singh shown that he was as intelligent as herself or more so, it would have been otherwise. The

emperor alone entertained thoughts of their marriage, for he had pitched upon Krishna Singh as the best match his daughter could make. That he was very stupid did not matter much, because his daughter, who was very intelligent, could manage everything. It was necessary that her equal in beauty should be her husband, and as he had found one in Krishna Singh, why not accept him? So thought the emperor, and it was owing to this idea that he did not like to disturb the familiarity that was growing up between him and his daughter Chandramukhi.

The princess was fit to be married in her sixteenth year, *i.e.*, seven years after Krishna Singh had entered her service, and Ramachandra, the Minister's son, had long had thoughts of marrying her, and had once or twice told her so. She also seemed to be agreeable, and continued to attend the college even after she was grown up.

One day before the college closed for the evening Ramachandra took a *ghatika's* leave from his master and waited for a chance to speak to the princess. Presently she started homewards with the Tukkuttukki Krishna Singh walking on in front as usual with the satchel, and her guard following her. Ramachandra sat near a car (*ratha*) and asked the princess to come to him as he had a secret to tell her, telling her guard at the same time to stand where they could not overhear what he was saying. He also asked the Tukkuttukki to walk a few steps further. Now the Tukkuttukki pretending to walk on quickly managed to get unobserved to the other side of the car and overheard everything that passed between them:—Ramachandra asked the princess whether she would adhere to her promise of marrying him. The princess told him that she would be very proud of it, both on account of his high parent-

age and his intellectual attainments; but she also told him that her father might not like it, as he (Ramachandra) was not much to look at, and as it was his declared intention to give her only to one who was as beautiful as she was. She then said, that as she liked the idea of the marriage much, it would be best to elope to some place where they could be married. Then they fixed a day for the elopement—the eighth day from that one—and separated. As soon as the day for the elopement was fixed on, Krishna Singh ran off unobserved and stood where he had been told, and as the guards were at a distance where they could not have heard the conversation, Ramachandra and Chandramukhi both thought that no one had overheard them, and each went home with mind undisturbed.

The night passed as usual, but next morning, when the emperor was holding his *darbar* (court), all of a sudden the Tukkuttukki came to him and told him that he wanted to speak to him privately about something. As the emperor loved Krishna Singh more than his life, he at once granted him his request, and asked everyone present to leave the room for a few minutes. Drawing a chair near him, he asked the Tukkuttukki to take it and to proceed with his news. But Krishna Singh asked him whether he knew how kings should educate their daughters! The emperor was quite confounded at this. He had always thought the Tukkuttukki to be the most stupid man on earth, and he had now posed him with a question which it was very difficult to answer! The Tukkuttukki next told him that such high authorities as Manu, Vyasa[8] and others had stated that a king should send his daughter to school till

[8] Ancient codifiers of Hindu Law.

her seventh year ; after which it was always better to have her educated at home by private teachers till she grew up, and that then she should be educated on the *parda*-system, by which the master sits on one side of a screen and the girl on the other, neither being able to see the other. He also told the emperor that he had deviated from one and all of these sound rules, with the result that his daughter was no longer his daughter ! He then told him what had happened the previous evening. The emperor was highly pleased at this display of sense and at the faithfulness shown by the lad in thus bringing this news to him in good time. He asked Krishna Singh to keep this a dead secret, as he would take the necessary steps to prevent the projected elopement from taking place.

The emperor at once issued an order summoning all the artisans of the place to attend the *darbar* in a couple of hours. The orders were duly obeyed, and when they came the emperor asked them whether it was possible for them to raise a great mansion, seven storeys in height, in a couple of days. They replied that with the kind favour of the king they could do it in one day. He made the necessary arrangements for it, asking the minister and other officers to suspend all other work in order to superintend the building of the mansion, and to procure all that was necessary for it. The emperor went to see his daughter and stuck beside her, watching her like a thief. No one knew what the mansion was meant for, and no one had the boldness to ask him, but the work duly progressed. It is said that even nature obeyed the emperor's orders, and that an enormous mansion, seven storeys high, was completed before the eighth *ghatika* of that evening. The minister and other officers deputed to look after the work then

sent word to the emperor that the mansion was finished, and with his permission went home to dinner. Such was the haste with which the work proceeded to its completion.

The emperor now called all the eunuchs and told them that they were to guard the topmost three storeys of the new mansion and allow no one to pass or repass, except one or two whom he was going to mention. As for the other four storeys below he sent for pensioned soldiers and gave them the same orders. After thus, as it were, garrisoning the mansion, he told them all that it was meant for his daughter, where she was to live henceforth till her marriage, and that with her would always live twenty female servants as her attendants and friends, the head of whom was to be one Sellam. Only Sellam and the Tukkuttukki were to take provisions and other things to the seventh mansion, and except Sellam and the Tukkuttukki, and, of course, her parents, no one was to be allowed to visit the princess. If any one, whoever he might be, were to enter any of the storeys, even in ignorance of who was confined in the place, his head was to be cut off then and there. Thus the very next night after her projected plans the princess was imprisoned!

She had never dreamt of anything like this. No one, except the Tukkuttukki and Sellam, could, she was told, pass and repass the steps of those seven storeys! What was the cause of all this? Had some spies brought the emperor news of her intended elopement after overhearing her? No! *That* could not be, for she had most carefully watched the place. Possibly the Tukkuttukki had somehow overheard her arrangements with Ramachandra, and had played her false. How could that be possible in such

a foolish creature? However, in her uncertainty, she was anxious to examine him.

It was more than the fifteenth *ghatika* of the night. The princess was sitting in her chair in great distress of mind at the sudden frustration of her plans. Krishna Singh was sitting in front of her, and she began to examine him, commencing in this way:—"Will the Tukkuttukki bring me that book from the cupboard and turn to the eleventh page and read?" Krishna Singh eyed her with anger for a couple of minutes, and rising up brought the book from the cupboard; but instead of reading it tore it to pieces, and, holding the pieces between his thumb and fore-finger, smelt at them and began to cry aloud till he sobbed. It was with very great difficulty that the princess pacified him.

She then asked the reason of his grief, and pointed to the state to which the poor book was reduced. He said: "Princess! It was *you* that took me, an orphan, and protected me as tenderly as possible for seven years. You are rich. It would have cost you nothing to have asked one of your teachers to have devoted a *ghatika* or two to my tuition: you did not do that. You are yourself so learned. I am ever by your side. You might have taught me for a *ghatika* or two every day. That also you did not do. I am now more than twenty, and I do not know how to say '*Hari-hom*!'[9] Knowing so much yourself, you purposely want to put me to shame in the presence of these slave girls. What else did you mean by asking me, who knew nothing as you know very well, to turn to the 11th page of that miserable book? I simplified everything by tearing the

[9] Salutation to Hari! Repeated by Hindu children before beginning the alphabet of any Indian language.

book to pieces. There it lies. All my ignorance is—your fault!"

Thus said the Tukkuttukki, and the princess took him at his word, and setting him down for a fool of the first water thought that she must have been unwise to have entertained suspicions about so simple a man. She praised all her household gods for giving her his services, and now that the emperor had given him the privilege of passing and repassing the storeys of the mansion, she thought of turning that privilege to the best account. In a word she wished to employ him as a love-messenger to Ramachandra, and to entrust him with her letters to her lover! No sooner did this idea strike her than she took up a piece of paper and wrote thereon how she had been imprisoned, the unaccountableness of it, her undiminished passion for him, and her readiness to take up any course that he would recommend. Lastly, she requested Ramachandra to relieve her from her imprisonment, to take her somewhere or other and there to marry her. After writing the letter she signed it most affectionately,—subscribing herself as his wife,—sealed it most carefully and gave it to the Tukkuttukki, asking him to take it unobserved to Ramachandra, her schoolmate and the minister's son. She also specially asked the Tukkuttukki to be very careful about the letter, not to drop it anywhere from carelessness, not to show it to anyone and to arouse no suspicions by carrying it openly. The Tukkuttukki asked her to disclose only to himself the contents of that letter about the safety of which she was so very anxious. She laughed at his foolishness and told him that it contained a paper of questions! The Tukkuttukki pretended to be highly satisfied with her reply and promised to take the paper

early in the morning to Ramachandra, as it was then so late.

As for poor Ramachandra, as soon as his father told him about the mansion, he at once thought within himself that somehow or other his conversation with the princess had become known to the emperor. He gave up all hopes of her, and trembled for his life. Would the emperor order his head to be cut off the next morning? He did not like to say anything to his father, but waited to see how matters would terminate.

The morning dawned. The princess and the Tukkuttukki got up from their beds, and hastily took their breakfast, and when it was over the princess ordered him to go to Ramachandra without losing any time. The Tukkuttukki rolled up the letter in half-a-dozen handkerchiefs, taking care to knot each of them in the presence of the princess. She laughed at his acts and told him that all those knots were more than enough for the safety of the letter. He then put the bundle under his arm and started off at once.

Now Krishna Singh had no idea of going to the emperor with the letter, for he had long known that the emperor intended giving him his daughter in marriage; and, in spite of the unfavourable opinion of him entertained by the people and the princess herself, he was sure of securing her hand. When a danger had occurred to his plans in the shape of a projected elopement, he thought that unless he reported the matter to the emperor and got the princess into safe custody, he might lose her for ever; and so he had told him the story, and no doubt the

princess was safe enough now! No Ramachandra could now steal her away. It was he that was to act the part of Ramachandra unknown to anyone, and prove what sort of man he was, and so falsify the general opinion entertained of him by others. He also thought that such a course would better secure him the heart of the princess and the praises of her father. It was to encompass this end that he had worked for a long time; and he now determined, if possible, to walk away with her on the proposed eighth day, himself acting the part of Ramachandra! He also thought that no ordinary course was now possible in so short a time as that.

Thus thinking he went down with the letter, and, going to the *bazar*, bought paper, pen and ink, and with these walked to the nearest jungle, where no one could see him. There he opened the letter, read the contents of it, and at once began a reply, as if from Ramachandra to the princess; for be it remembered that the Tukkuttukki had always been in the same class as the minister's son, and could imitate his handwriting very well.

The reply ran thus:—

"My dear wife,—Many thanks for your affectionate letter. I had heard all about the mansion from my father, even before your letter came, and suspected something. Some devil has surely told your father of our arrangements, but I am not a man to be discouraged by such mishaps. Get your father to place you in the fourteenth room, from which I will arrange to take you on the sixth day hence. Only you must give me what assistance I need through this fool. Fool though he is, still you should be very glad

of his help now, and send through him a *lakh* of rupees to pay for our journey. The next letter will give you the necessary particulars. Your husband-to-be, Ramachandra."

With a perfect freedom, and a perfect imitation of Ramachandra's handwriting, did the Tukkuttukki forge this letter. He then sealed it, safely knotted it in his handkerchief, and putting it under his arm, returned to the princess before midday. He arrived laughing, and told her how many times the minister's son kissed her letter containing the questions, and how delighted he was to receive it. This made the princess anxious to see the reply ; but the Tukkuttukki would not give it up, telling her how uncharitable it was of her and of the minister's son to suspect him so much. For Ramachandra, he said, had also told him half-a-dozen times to be careful about the reply. But in the end he untied all the knots, and gave the letter to the impatient princess. The princess read the letter and danced for joy. She kissed it more than a hundred times; and, going inside her room, called the Tukkuttukki to her, and asked him to swear not to say a word about the letters to anyone. She then packed up in small bundles the *lakh* of rupees that Ramachandra wanted and told him to take them down one by one to her lover. As Tukkuttukki was doing this for himself, he managed it with all despatch in this way. He had been a regular customer to an old woman who sold sweetmeats in Dharapura; and so procured a room in her house and put the money in it.

When he had stored all his treasure there he changed his dress, and, disguised as an Arab, went through all the stables in the place in search of fast and sound horses. After

great difficulty he procured two very fine *asvaratnas*, [10] which could gallop at the rate of two *kos* a *ghatika*[11] for a whole week, without taking any food or drink. Such horses could not be had at all times, and it was by good fortune that the Tukkuttukki chanced on them. He paid Rs. 50,000[12] for them, and hired two grooms to take care of them. He also spent nearly Rs. 25,000 in saddling and ornaments. He paid something for the *paraiyas*,[13] and the remaining Rs. 25,000 he spent in buying a rope ladder and a rare kind of saw.

After securing all these things, he wrote the following letter to the princess :—

"Dear wife,—I really admire our Tukkuttukki. Though he is a most stupid fellow, he has somehow managed to bring the *lakh* of rupees that you so kindly sent me in safety. I have bought two of the finest horses, which can go day and night at the rate of two *kos* a *ghatika*. I send through our fool a rope ladder and a saw. For the saw alone I had to pay more than Rs. 20,000, for it is a magical one, and never makes any noise even if you cut iron with it. It is made of adamant, and can saw through the hardest iron in less than two seconds. On the fifth evening, I will go to East King's Street, that is just opposite to the large topmost window of your mansion. At the tenth *ghatika* of the night, when all are sound asleep, you must get up without any noise, saw through the window and cast the rope ladder towards the horses. I shall be there to catch it; and you must then descend by

10 Gems of horses.
11 About 12 miles an hour.
12 Half a *lakh* of rupees.
13 Low-caste servants who act as grooms: pariahs.

it, and we shall both be off on our horses in no time! Within the next five days send down to me as much money as possible for our expenses. I will also, without the knowledge of my father, bring something as well. Your affectionate husband, Ramachandra."

The Tukkuttukki closed the letter, and tied it up in his usual manner. In another handkerchief he tied up the saw and the ladder, and returned to Chandramukhi with them all.

As soon as he approached the princess he kept on smiling, and so she beckoned him while he was yet at a distance, and rebuked him for looking so happy. He could not help it he said—"for the horses were so very beautiful."

"What horses?" asked the princess.

"Why, our *yajaman*[14] has bought two of the finest horses in the world. I have seen all the horses of our emperor, and none of them can approach these in beauty. I may not know how to turn up the eleventh page of a book, but you may depend upon my opinion as regards a horse!"

Thus spake the Tukkuttukki, but the princess wanted him to give up the letter he had, but before he would do so, he placed before her the saw and the rope ladder. She put them in her desk, without even looking at them, as she was so impatient for the letter. At last he gave it her. How great was her joy as she drank in the contents of it with eyes wide open. The horses were ready for the elopement! The saw and the ladder (thank heaven she had

[14] Master.

them safe in her box !) were ready and with her ! What more remained to be done ? Money ! But only for the expenses of the honey-moon ! And she had plenty at her disposal, as her whole *khazana*[15] had been removed to the mansion with her ! She took the Tukkuttukki to her *khazana* and asked him to try and take it all down to Ramachandra, or at any rate as much as he could manage. He agreed on two conditions. She must explain to him : firstly, what those horses were for ; and secondly, why she was emptying her treasury in that way and sending all her wealth to Ramachandra. She told him that on the next Sunday night (for that was the day fixed for the elopement), she, in company with Ramachandra had to go to the adjacent temple of Kali, to propitiate the goddess, and that the money was for the expenses. And she again prayed him not to open his lips on the subject. He promised on condition she took him also to the temple ! On her replying in the negative he began to cry and weep aloud. She then consoled him in several ways, and promised on her return to bring him some rare and sweet *prasadas*.[16] He then named 100 different kinds of *prasadas*, and insisted on her bringing them with her on her return. She promised (laughing within herself) to bring a hundred more in addition to those he had enumerated. He was then left to himself and managed to empty her whole treasury, and whatever he brought down he changed into *hundis*.[17]

Thus everything was settled : the horses for the

[15] Treasury.

[16] Remainders—always, puddings cooked of rice and other eatables —of an offering to the god or goddess.

[17] Cheques addressed to the correspondents of a trader in a distant place.

journey, the expenses for some months at least in a strange country, and the due intimation of all these preparations to the princess, Chandramukhi being all the while under the impression that her beloved Ramachandra was no ordinary man to so quickly show the emperor that he could not secure his daughter.

But alas for poor Ramachandra ! What did he know of these goings on in Dharapura ? Ever since he had heard from the minister, his father, about the mansion, he had been in fear of his life, and had confined himself to his own room ! Alas for the poor *Ekachakradhipati !* What notion had he of the tricks that were being played in the very mansion that he had built in one day for his dear daugh[illegible]

The days went on, every moment seeming a year to the princess. At last Sunday came, and the princess, wishing to take her choicest ornaments and dresses with her, and not liking the Tukkuttukki to stay with her while she was preparing to descend, asked him to go down to Ramachandra, giving him a letter to the latter to keep him engaged somehow so as to prevent him from watching them. With great joy did the Tukkuttukki receive the letter, though he pretended to be very stubborn about staying and watching the preparations for the pilgrimage to the temple of Kali. He put her on her oath several times about the one hundred *prasadas*, and went off thanking all his stars ! For what would have been the end of all his preparations had not the princess sent him down ? So thought the Tukkuttukki as he was descending, thanking his household gods for his good luck. The first thing he

did when he got down was to tear the letter to pieces ; and then he spent the whole day in getting the horses ready for a long journey, and in securing the *hundis* in the saddles. As soon as it was evening he dismissed the two *paraiyas* (grooms) with presents, and himself assuming the disguise of a groom, brought the horses opposite the large window of the mansion in the East King's Street, and tied them to a tree.

Meanwhile the princess had been counting every minute of the day, and as soon as it was twilight she saw the horses with a *paraiya* groom, and though they were a long way below her she had no hesitation in concluding that they were the finest and swiftest of horses. The Tukkuttukki being sure now of walking off with the princess, laid himself down to rest till the tenth *ghatika*, and having been restless for the whole of the preceding week he slept soundly.

Now the emperor of Dharapura had in some way incurred the displeasure of a robber chief, who determined to punish him severely. The day fixed upon for this was that of the elopement. The town was to be plundered, and sixty-four petty chiefs had been told off to sack each of the sixty-four streets of Dharapura. Each one of these had a number of robbers under him, and the orders were that the very salt-cellars were to be taken out of the houses. One of these petty chiefs came to the East King's Street, where he saw the two splendid horses and the groom sleeping beneath a tree. He thought that they must be waiting for two gentlemen, who must be very rich to own such animals. So he told one of his comrades to sit down near them and watch his opportunity. He also told him

to plunder the owners and bring off the horses with all the booty thus gathered. So the thief sat down by one of the horses and waited for the owners to turn up, while the Tukkuttukki snored away the night.

The appointed time approached. The princess had prepared everything for the journey, and had packed up all her ornaments and dresses in a small box. At the tenth *ghatika* of the night she arose and found to her joy that all in the mansion were fast asleep. Thinking that her household gods were truly favouring her elopement with Ramachandra, obedient to his instructions she sawed through the window in two seconds and cast down the rope-ladder. Fortunately for her and for the snoring Tukkuttukki it caught in a strong branch of the tree. She pulled it, and finding it tight thought that her Ramachandra was holding firmly on to it. She then began to descend. The sparkling jewels in her ears, which shone like burning fire in the dead of the night, and the height from which she descended were more than enough to infuse terror into the heart of the thief. He thought that no human figure could dare such an audacious thing at the hour of the night, and to imagine a woman descending through the air at such a time was to him beyond all possibility! The more he gazed at the descending princess the more his fears increased and he was almost mad by the time she neared him. Setting her down for a devil that was descending to prey upon him, he at once untied the horse he was sitting near and mounting it rode towards the South.

When the princess had nearly reached the ground she saw one of the horses being ridden off and thought that Ramachandra was riding away in advance. "Perhaps

Ramachandra thinks that I may speak a word or two on seeing him and thus arouse suspicion. That must be the reason why he goes on a little in advance." Thus she thought as she reached the tree, and again thinking that Ramachandra had purposely left the ladder in the tree to go on in advance, she got down from it, untied the other horse in haste, and followed the supposed Ramachandra!

About this time Sellam, the head of the female servants, got up and, finding the window cut, was much alarmed; but, as she possessed great presence of mind, she calmly searched for the princess before raising a cry. She could find the princess nowhere. The window that was cut and the ladder hanging from it showed what had happened. As she would be the first victim of the anger of the emperor, being the chief of the maid-servants, she made up her mind to escape the danger and to track the princess if possible. So she got down by the ladder with the saw in her hand, fixed the window in its place so as to prevent suspicion, for that night at least, and when she reached the tree destroyed the rope-ladder, which the princess in her hurry had left to tell its tale. She then ran with headlong speed in the track of the horses.

After Sellam had begun her race with the horses the Tukkuttukki awoke, but with his usual ingenuity, instead of losing courage at the course events had taken he was delighted at them! "Thank heaven. Paramesvara kept me sound asleep! Somehow or other the horses have got away, and I dreamt I heard the footsteps of women here. Surely the princess must be on ahead not far off. Had I been awake I should have been in a very awkward position! There would have been nothing for it then but to make a

clean confession of all my tricks. Perhaps she might have murdered me in her anger! Perhaps she might have returned to her mansion by the ladder and tried to hide everything! Thanks to Paramesvara, I was in a timely sleep and am thus relieved from much confusion. I will follow the princess, tell her that I have tracked her to her place of pilgrimage, and beg *prasadas*! I will still play the simpleton."

With these ideas in his head the Tukkuttukki ran on post-haste to overtake the horses. The distance between the thief on the first horse and the second horse was that of a *ghatika*; that between the princess and Sellam was also a *ghatika*, and that between Sellam and the Tukkuttukki was likewise a *ghatika*. In this way they raced on the whole night.

The morning twilight approached, and the birds began to sing to announce the dawn. All our racers found themselves in the midst of a thick jungle. The princess, even in the grey twilight (for so great was her anxiety to get a glimpse of her beloved Ramachandra), looked well at the rider of the first horse, and to her confusion and surprise found him to be a black awkward looking *kalla*[18] instead of her lover! She spurred on her horse, went very near him and found him without doubt to be a *kalla*! She unsheathed her sword and with one stroke stretched him on the ground and secured the horse!

"Alas! was I created in this world merely to undergo calamities? By some mistake or other instead of Ramachandra a black *kalla* has been riding before me! Perhaps

[18] A robber-class in South India.

this thief has killed Ramachandra somewhere on the way and plundered his horse. I am now in the thick of the forest without assistance. I do not know what is to become of me. I will lie down here and die!" She sat down weeping, overcome with grief, but it was not long before, to her surprise, she saw Sellam in the distance. What was her joy then! Both flew into each other's arms and embraced; and the princess now explained to her briefly all the previous story. While they were thus speaking they saw the Tukkuttukki running towards them at headlong speed, and the first question he put to the princess when he saw her was as to her promise to give him the promised *prasadas!* She was highly vexed at his stupidity, but still thanking her gods for having sent the faithful fool to her, promised to give him the *prasadas* before long.

Sellam was the first to console the princess. She advised her not to lose courage, and they then agreed that the best course would be to go to some unknown town, and there to live as private people, till better times. They then got upon the horses and asked the Tukkuttukki to run before them.

Now as to affairs at Dharapura. When the morning dawned the maid-servants of the mansion were greatly alarmed at the disappearance of the princess, Sellam and the Tukkuttukki, and reported the matter to the old king. He was extremely vexed, but ordered the maid-servants to keep the matter strictly secret, and live in the mansion as if the princess was present among them. He promised to make a secret search for the lost princess and sent his spies in several directions, and enquired about Ramachandra, and found that he was safe at home. The fact

that the Tukkuttukki and Sellam had disappeared at the same time as the princess made the old king hopeful of her safety; so the maid-servants returned to the mansion, and performed their duties just as if the princess was living among them, and supplies of provisions, as if they were for the princess, were sent up regularly.

Meanwhile in the forest the Tukkuttukki thought that really ill-luck never left him, for while Sellam rode side by side with the princess, he had to run before her like a dog! He did not, however, lose courage, and in this way the three journeyed on till the middle of the day, when the princess and Sellam became very tired. They were also very thirsty, and asked the Tukkuttukki whether he could get them a little water to drink. He asked them to sit down in the cool shade of a large tree, and went off to search for water. He looked about everywhere. At last, at about six or seven *ghatikas'* distance to the West, so it appeared to him, he saw a red glitter. He went towards it, and then saw a large lake. Horror of horrors! The water in the lake looked like blood, for it was very red! He, however, took a handful of it to drink,[19] and behold when he put it to his mouth it became as pure as crystal. This made him think that there must be something near the lake which gave it its red colour, so he went round it.

To the extreme North he found a ruby as big as a man's thumb glittering like fire, which he picked up, and, after rolling it up in several wraps, tied it safely to his hip inside his clothes. He then collected the water in

[19] Natives of India *do* drink water by handfuls.

half a dozen *sembu*[20] leaves and returned to the ladies, who drank it and rested for a while, resuming their journey at about the twentieth *ghatika*.

So far the Tukkuttukki did not know in what country he was travelling, and in the morning the party found themselves in the middle of a jungle with nothing to show them where they were going. But about the twenty-fifth *ghatika* that evening they emerged from the jungle and neared a road. On enquiry the Tukkuttukki found to his great joy that it led to Pushpapura. His vigour was renewed by the news, and he was anxious, if possible, to reach Pushpapura before night, and actually succeeded in nearing the vicinity of his native city before it was dark. He then asked the princess and Sellam to sit down in a *chatram*[21] with the horses, while he went into the town and hired a very spacious and convenient house, three storeys high, and when he returned he took them to it.

The two women were most thankful for the assistance of the Tukkuttukki in their trouble, and asked him to get them what he could to eat for the night. He went to the chief temple of the town and brought away food enough for their purpose, and after eating a little of it, the princess and her companion, much exhausted by their journey, retired to sleep. The Tukkuttukki, however, had no rest. He tied up the horses in the ground-floor of the house and took a big room in it for his own use, in which he secured the *hundis* and the other money he had so carefully hidden in the horses' saddles at Dharapura; and, though it was

20 *Caladium nymphæfolium*, a garden plant, with large broad succulent leaves and roots.

21 An inn.

very late, he went to the *bazar*, where he bought everything that was necessary for a comfortable life in Pushpapura, except rice, which he purposely omitted to bring. He then retired to rest at about midnight.

They all got up very early in the morning, for 'light meals procure light slumbers.' The ladies found provisions, vessels and everything ready, and the Tukkuttukki told them he had managed to bring them all during the night, as he had seen that they were so tired by their journey that they would urgently require them in the morning. They were rather surprised at what they thought to be the dawn of intelligence in the Tukkuttukki, but their surprise was changed to amusement when, on enquiring for rice, they were told that he had forgotten to buy it! So they ridiculed him for his foolishness in having omitted the most important thing of all!

The princess now asked the Tukkuttukki to do the menial work of the household, draw water from the well, wash the clothes, bring the necessary provisions from the *bazar* and perform other out-of-door and petty services, while she asked Sellam to be cook. In this way they lived at Pushpapura as ordinary people without attracting any notice, the ladies never leaving their third storey and returning to their former *gosha* [22] life, and managing to live in comfort through the assistance of the Tukkuttukki.

Meanwhile the Tukkuttukki always used to finish all his daily work in a few hours, and after taking his meals with the ladies, he used to go out and amuse himself by wandering up and down. He now bought another pair of

[22] Closed life within doors: the *zanana* system.

very fine horses and a beautiful coach, and engaged four grooms for the horses, giving up the whole of the ground-floor of the house for stables. He also gave orders for some beautiful dresses and had them prepared according to the best fashion of the day. All this was done after dinner, for until then he had to draw water and do other menial work. The ladies knew nothing as to what he was doing, as the Tukkuttukki used to leave them in his dirty menial's dress and returned to them in the same clothes, but he spent his leisure hours in the town driving about up and down in his coach and four, dressed like a prince or even better!

Thus passed many days, till one day the Tukkuttukki determined to pay a visit to the king of Pushpapura. Now to visit a king empty-handed is always deemed to be a sin, so he took up the ruby he had picked up at the red lake with him as a present, and drove to the palace. His rich dress, his beautiful person, the coach and four, and everything about him made him appear to be himself a king or a prince, so the king of Pushpapura did not think it at all odd that he should visit him, and treated him as an equal, going forward a few steps to meet him, and receiving him with a royal greeting. The Tukkuttukki asked after his good health and tendered his present, which went far to confirm the previous opinion the king had formed of his social position. He was indeed very pleased to receive so rare a gift, and told the Tukkuttukki that he had one gem of the kind, that he had for a long time been in search of another to match with it, and that he was accordingly all the more delighted now to have had one given him. The Tukkuttukki now insulted the king,

or rather seemed to insult him, by saying that his was a gem of the first water, and that no other gem in the world could approach it either in beauty or value ! The king flew into a fury at this piece of brag, and made the same boast as to his gem. They then both agreed to a wager as to which was the best gem. The king's stake was his kingdom in case his gem was found to be the inferior one, while the Tukkuttukki bound himself to serve the king for twenty-eight years in case he lost. Both the gems were then subjected to all possible tests. The best gem-assayers and merchants were called in, and one and all of them gave it as their opinion that the Tukkuttukki's gem was immensely superior to the king's. The king thereupon true to his word told the Tukkuttukki to take possession of his kingdom.

Now our hero was not a person to be blinded by fortune, as he possessed a good deal of foresight. He thought that he would not be acting rightly if he took upon himself the duties of a king publicly, and he told the king that he was satisfied to be his agent ;—that is, as the king was rather old, he would take upon himself to do all the royal duties in the name of the king. The Tukkuttukki was to transact all the royal business, but the king was to sign the papers and appear to manage the State. He agreed to act thus during the life-time of the old king, and then he was to succeed him. What more could the old king want ? He thanked the youth and named him henceforth "the Young King." He asked him his parentage, and the now young king Krishna Singh replied that he was of royal parentage, but more than this he would not say, asking the old king to excuse him, and saying that everything would be revealed to him in due

course. The old king was delighted with Krishna Singh and wished to be relieved from the burden of the State at once, and agreeably to his wishes King Krishna Singh took at once upon himself the management of the kingdom of Pushpapura. Thus suddenly, by the caprice of fortune, the Tukkuttukki turned into a king, and henceforth was known as King Krishna Singh.

In the evening, after the court was over, King Krishna Singh started to go to his house in the city, accompanied by the palace band, horses, elephants and other royal paraphernalia as usual, but he forbad any of them to go on with him on the pain of death. Such things, he said, were meant for proud empty-headed kings, and not for persons like himself. All he wanted was to go home as an ordinary man without any pomp. Thus he returned home before the fifth *ghatika* and resumed his duties as a menial! During the night and up to the tenth *ghatika* of the morning he used to act as a servant under the princess and Sellam, and after his dinner he came down, dressed himself like a king and drove to the court, and there swayed the whole kingdom till the second *ghatika* of evening. This was his routine for several months.

Krishna Singh had studied the *Rajaniti*[23] so well that he ruled like Brihaspati,[24] being just to every one. The people were over-joyed at the justice and impartiality of their young king, and the old king too, as he had no son, thanked the gods for having sent him one so intelligent and so able to wield the sceptre after him. He treated him very kindly, and had a high regard for his merits, but he dared not ask him to disclose his parentage. Thus

[23] A popular book on politics according to Indian notions.

[24] The minister of Indra, the Ruler of the Heavens.

no one knew where he came from in the morning or where he went to in the evening, and though he attended the court most punctually, and performed the duties of a king most satisfactorily towards all, from the highest to the lowest, the Ministers of the empire thought it very unfair on them not to know anything about him. They accordingly planned among themselves to go to the East Street in disguise and watch his carriage every evening.

After a while one of them thus found out Krishna Singh's house as it happened, on the day that the princess took an oil bath in the third storey. Her hair was so long that it touched the surface of the second storey, and Sellam had to anoint her locks one by one. This Minister observed this also, and as it is the usual opinion that beauty and length of the hair go together, he set down the woman bathing inside to be a paragon of beauty, as indeed she was. "Who else should that beauty be but the lady of our revered young king?" thought he, "We should purify ourselves by a sight of her holy presence!" With these thoughts in his head he returned and informed his fellow-ministers of the place of their young king's residence. He also pointed out to them that eye-sight was useless to them so long as the Queen—the lady of their young king—remained unseen by them, explaining to them what he had observed.

Then all the ministers went to the old king and excited the curiosity till he, too, thought that he had been most foolish in not having made himself better acquainted with the young king. He now wished to manage to know more of him without injuring his feelings, as he had found him very stubborn on one or two occasions when he had

questioned him about his country and parentage. So the ministers proposed that they should forge a document to the effect that it was the custom to perform a certain festival called the Swinging Feast once a year in the great temple of Kali at Pushpapura, insert this document in the records, and explain to the young king that it had not been held for the past few years owing to certain causes, but that, as they had now entered on a new epoch, it ought to be held as before. The document was to say that during this festival the rule was that every man, high and low, from king to beggar, must come and sit along with his wife on a swing to be set up in the great grove opposite the temple of Kali, and there be swung to and fro.

Accordingly such a document was forged with the signature of the old king attached to it, and inserted among the records; the time for the festival becoming due being stated to be about a month hence. The young king knew nothing about these plans, but he did know that no such festival was in vogue in Pushpapura, because he had previously carefully studied all the records. So when the ministers suddenly spoke to him about the Swinging Feast and asked him to issue the necessary orders for it, he thought within himself that it must be some trick played upon him. "Might it be that some of these ministers have, after great difficulty, found out my residence and there have caught sight of the princess?" thought he: "Might it be that these people mistaking her for my wife have invented this feast merely in order to get a public view of her? Never mind! Let me satisfy them and thereby establish my claim as husband to Chandramukhi!" With these thoughts in his mind, and begging to be excused for the oversight, he at

once iss...d ... necessary orders, and everything was arranged. ...eanwhile king Krishna Singh followed his usual ...ne till the very day fixed for the festival.

It was now nearly a year since the princess left Dharapura; and all the while she had been living as a private person without seeing any one except Sellam and the Tukkuttukki. "Alas! What a cruel woman I am!" thought she; "I am the only child of my parents, and have left them to their fate, flying away hither. There I lived in all honour: here I am but an ordinary woman! I might have become the queen of an empire some day if I had remained with my father now I am ashamed to explain who I am! It is nearly a year since I grew up, and hundreds of princes would have been courting me by this time were I in Dharapura; but now I have not even a single prince to seek my hand. Sellam wants me to marry the Tukkuttukki. Alas, poor man! How could I marry him when he does not even know that two and two make four! I do wish my father would come in search of me!"

It was about noon when she fell into this reverie and the scorching midday sun together with the uneasiness of her mind produced a sort of headache which made her drowsy, when she was suddenly aroused by Sellam with a loud acclamation that her father the emperor had tracked them at last! "I have been thinking about this for the last half *ghatika*," said the princess. "Has the dream proved true? I have wished it, but still I very much fear the wrath of my father." So the princess, wringing her hands, asked Sellam to explain what she meant. "Does it require an explanation?" said Sellam. "Do not you hear the sounds of the drums and pipes announcing a royal progress? Why should

these sounds be heard in this street on this ... ne? We have been living here for nearly a year and at no time have we heard such sounds. It is this that makes me think that our emperor is in search of us."

Sellam had scarcely finished speaking when the royal procession stopped at their very gates. Their fears now knew no bounds and the princess changed colour. She asked Sellam to run down at once and see who it was that had alighted at their gates. Sellam ran down and what was her surprise when she found it was the Tukkuttukki. "Do my eyes deceive me?" she exclaimed: "He was here two *ghatikas* ago washing the utensils; and now he comes, dressed like a king! Can my eyes see straight? Are my senses all gone?"

Nevertheless she could not deny that the person sitting on the threshold was the Tukkuttukki. She ran up and reported to the princess that the king that had come was the satchel-bearer! The pomp with which he had come and the honour paid to him by all that accompanied him instilled a mysterious awe into the mind of the princess, and forsaking her *gosha* for the time she ran down to meet him just as he was coming up. They met and saluted and she who commanded him till now found in his countenance an unspeakable majesty, which forced her to obey his orders. He adorned her with jewels from head to foot, while she gladly received the honours thrust upon her and asked him to tell her by what good fortune he had become king. He replied that everything would be revealed in time and that she must start without delay to the temple of Kali for the Swinging Festival. She could not but obey.

By this time a voice was heard:—"My dear young king, why are you so late?" It was the old king calling! What were the thoughts of the princess now? Tukkut-tukki that had but three or four short *ghatikas* ago washed her utensils had become a king, and was being called to in very affectionate terms by the old king! Wonder of wonders! She was impatient to ask, but there was no time. So they all started for the temple of Kali.

As all the preparations for the feast had been made solely in order to get a view of the princess—now the young queen,— the ministers and others had a very good view of her, as she was kept swinging for a very long time in the swing in which she sat with king Krishna Singh. The old king threw a very valuable pearl *hara* [25] over his new king's neck. But he who had once had the patience to run for a whole day before the flying horses now found the *hara* too heavy, so he took it off and hung it on the branch of a tree near the swing. The feast was kept up for a long while and the party did not return till about the second *ghatika* of the night. All the way home king Krishna Singh was praised as the noblest and most intelligent of kings. Here and there a petitioner stood forth and said:—"Good and gracious king, I have been waiting for the whole of the last fortnight, please send me away soon."

The princess could not understand all this. "How was it that he who did not know how to turn to the eleventh page was now a king!" thought she. "Let me wait. Let me wait. It was haste that deprived me of my father." As soon as they reached home the princess asked king Krishna

[25] Garland.

Singh to relate his story. He said he would take off his *angarkha* (coat) before telling her, and as he did so to his great vexation he found that he had forgotten the pearl *hara* that the old King had given him. His face at once changed colour and his wife asked him what was the matter. "I have forgotten the *hara*!" was his reply, and with that he began to descend hastily. The princess caught his arm and said, "My dear husband, don't you know that I am the daughter of an emperor? I can get you hundreds of such *haras*. Don't trouble yourself any more about it. Be quiet and stay here."

Krishna Singh told her that as she was young and inexperienced she spoke so, and that it was not right for him to neglect a present, even if it were a *kaudi*.[26] Besides he would be back in a couple of minutes. The princess proposed sending a servant, but he objected that if they did so the neglect might become known some day and vex the old king. So he ran off and reached the grove. It was a very dark night, and a dead silence prevailed in it. Groping his way he crept to the tree on which he had suspended the *hara*; and put out his right hand to take it. Horror of horrors! A black and hungry serpent that was sitting over it bit him severely and he fell down dead.

Alas! poor Krishna Singh! There was his newly married wife to whom he had not spoken a word as a husband! There was the old king entirely dependent upon him. He had not had time even to see his father Tan Singh. Poor old emperor, what would his feelings be when he came to know what had happened! Thus, leaving so many

[26] *Kaudis* used as money, one *kaudi* being equal to a sixteenth of a pie.

people that loved him at the moment of reaping the fruits of his labours, poor Krishna Singh died ! But it was not for ever.

Between the *garbhagriha*[27] of the temple of Kali and the inner chamber of the house of the princess of Pushpapura there was a subterranean passage, through which she used to come daily at midnight and propitiate the deity. That day too she came according to her usual custom and worshipped the goddess. After her prayers were over she requested Kali to give her a good and noble husband and at once a voice was heard in the sky : "There lies a prince in my holy presence. He shall be thy husband." She ran headlong, and instead of a man sleeping she found a lifeless corpse. With the true faith of an affectionate wife she began to weep and wail, and at once another voice was heard : "My child, all this is my trick to prove you. Now that you have so successfully stood the test, return to my holy presence and with a handful of the sacred ashes go to him again, sprinkle them on his face, and request him to rise." She obeyed the orders of the Ambika,[28] and to her joy the man rose up, when she took hold of his hands and humbly asked him to accompany her home, telling him what had happened.

By this time the princess of Dharapura, finding that her husband was not returning, suspected something wrong and flew to the grove with Sellam. When they reached the temple of Kali, what did they find but another woman asking his hand ! After a while the news of all this reached the ears of the old king, who was very glad to think that a

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27 The inmost shrine of Hindu temples in which the idol is worshipped.
28 Goddess.

divine order had been given to his daughter to marry the young king. But after having celebrated the Swinging Feast he was unable to deny the right of wifeship to the Dharapura princess, and so to avoid all misunderstandings he had them both married to Krishna Singh.

Invitations to the marriage were sent out in all directions. The Emperor of Dharapura also, who had by this time come to know everything, proclaimed that he meant to give his daughter Chandramukhi in marriage to king Krishna Singh in Pushpapura. A closed palanquin, containing nothing, accompanied the female retinue of the emperor, and in it the princess Chandramukhi was supposed to go to Pushpapura, where the marriage was celebrated with all deserving pomp, for kings bore the marriage palanquins of Krishna Singh and the two princesses. The emperor was extremely pleased at the adventures of Krishna Singh and at his success in having won a kingdom of his own in addition to the empire he got with his wife.

The story is now almost ended, but a word as to what had become of Tan Singh all this while and of the slippers hidden in the temple of Kali. Tan Singh, as his son had so intelligently prophesied, became poor very soon after Krishna Singh left him, and with his wife and two other sons was living in a hole and corner, having been by his own foolishness and extravagance reduced to his original condition of poverty. Krishna Singh had found this out as soon as he reached Pushpapura, but did not like to disturb his own plans by revealing himself just then. However, now that everything was about to be settled, he ordered a palanquin of flowers to be brought to the temple of Kali, took

the slippers with which his father had beaten him out of the hole, placed them on it and brought them to the palace. He then sent word to his father Tan Singh that the king of the town wanted him with all the members of his family immediately. Tan Singh did not understand what the orders meant, but he was obliged to obey them.

Krishna Singh at once recognised his parents and brothers, but none of them recognised Krishna Singh in the young king, so he explained before the whole assembly all about his adventures from the time he had been beaten; and, pointing to the slippers, he said: "By the good fortune of my father's slippers I am now the husband of princesses. He punished me for having demanded *one*, but as the shoes are a pair they have given me a pair of wives!"

With these words he prostrated himself before his parents and brothers. They all wept for joy and sorrow, and he at once took them into the palace. King Krishna Singh after this lived a very long and prosperous life with his two beautiful wives, sometimes in Dharapura and sometimes in Pushpapura.

The story has ended, and nothing remains to be told except that Krishna Singh had a number of sons to console the sonless age of the old King of Pushpapura and of the Emperor of Dharapura.

XXI

BRAHMARAKSHASA AND THE HAIR

In a certain village there lived a very rich landlord, who owned several villages, but was such a great miser that no tenant would willingly cultivate his lands, and those he had gave him not a little trouble. He was, indeed, so vexed with them that he left all his lands untilled and his tanks and irrigation channels dried up. All this, of course, made him poorer and poorer day by day. Nevertheless he never liked the idea of freely opening his purse to his tenants and obtaining their good will. While he was in this frame of mind a learned *sanyasi* paid him a visit, and on his representing his case to him, the holy man said:—

"My dear son, I know an incantation (*mantra*) in which I can instruct you. If you repeat it for three months, day and night, a Brahmarakshasa will appear before you on the first day of the fourth month. Make him your servant and then you can set at naught all your petty troubles with your tenants. The Brahmarakshasa will obey all your orders and you will find him equal to a hundred servants."

Our hero fell at his feet and begged to be instructed at once. The sage then sat facing the East, and his disciple the landlord, facing the West, and in this position formal instruction was given, after which the *sanyasi* went his way.

The landlord, mightily pleased at what he had learnt, went on practising the incantation, till, on the first day of the fourth month, the great Brahmarakshasa stood before him.

"What do you want, Sir, from my hands?" said he—"What is the object of your having propitiated me for these three months?"

The landlord was thunderstruck at the huge monster that now stood before him and still more so at his terrible voice, but nevertheless, he said:—"I want you to become my servant and obey all my commands."

"Agreed," answered the Brahmarakshasa in a very mild tone, for it was his duty to leave off his impertinent ways when any one who had performed the required penance wanted him to become his servant; "Agreed. But you must always give me work to do, when one job is finished you must at once give me a second and so on. If you fail I shall kill you."

The landlord, thinking that he would have work for several such Brahmarakshasas, was pleased to see that his demoniacal servant was so eager to help him. He at once took him to a large tank which had been dried up for several years, and, pointing to it, spoke as follows:—

"You see this large tank, you must make it as deep as the height of two palmyra trees and repair the embankment wherever it is broken."

"Yes, my master, your orders shall be obeyed," humbly replied the servant and fell to work.

The landlord, thinking that it would take several months, if not years, to do the work in the tank, for it was two *kos* long and one *kos* broad, returned delighted to his

home, where his people were awaiting him with a sumptuous dinner. He enjoyed himself amazingly with his wife, but when it was approaching evening the Brahmarakshasa came to inform his master that he had finished his work in the tank! He was indeed astonished and feared for his own life!

"What! finished the work in one day, which I thought would occupy him for months and years; if he goes on at this rate, how shall I keep him employed? And when I cannot find employment for him he will kill me!" Thus he thought and began to weep. His wife wiped the tears that ran down his face, and said:—

"My dearest husband, you must not lose courage. Get from the Brahmarakshasa all the work you can and then let me know. I'll give him something that will keep him engaged for a very very long time and then he'll trouble us no more."

But her husband only thought her words to be meaningless, and followed the Brahmarakshasa to see what he had done. Sure enough the thing was as complete as complete could be, so he asked him to plough *all* his lands, which extended over twenty villages! This was done in two *ghatikas*! He next made him to dig and cultivate *all* his dry and garden lands. This was done in the twinkling of an eye! The landlord now grew hopeless.

"What more work have you for me?" roared the Brahmarakshasa, as he found that his master had nothing for him to do and that the time for his eating him up was approaching.

"My dear friend," said he, "my wife says she has a little job to give you ; do it, please, now. I think that that is the last thing I can give you to do, and after it, in obedience to the conditions under which you took service with me, I must become your prey !"

At this moment his wife came to them, holding in her left hand a long hair, which she had just pulled out from her head, and said:—

"Well, Brahmarakshasa, I have only a very light job for you. Take this hair and when you have made it straight bring it back to me."

The Brahmarakshasa calmly received it and sat in a *pipal* tree to make it straight. He rolled it several times on his thigh and lifted it up to see if it had become straight : but no, it would still bend ! Just then it occurred to him that goldsmiths, when they want to make their metal wires straight, have them heated in a fire. So he went to a fire and placed the hair over it, and, of course, it frizzled up with a nasty smell ! He was horrified !

"What will my master's wife say if I do not return her the hair she gave me?"

So he became mightily afraid and ran away !

This story is told to explain the modern custom of nailing a handful of hair to a tree in which devils are supposed to dwell to drive them away.

XXII

THE BEGGAR AND THE FIVE MUFFINS

In a certain village there lived a poor beggar and his wife. The man used to go out every morning with a clean vessel in his hand, return home with rice enough for the day's meal, and thus they lived on in extreme poverty.

One day a poor Madhva Brahman invited them to a feast, and, among Madhvas muffins (*tosai*) are always a part of the good things on festive occasions. So during the feast the beggar and his wife had their fill of muffins. They were so pleased with them that the woman was extremely anxious to prepare some more muffins in her own house, and began to save every day a little rice from what her husband brought her for the purpose. When enough had been thus collected she begged a poor neighbour's wife to give her a little black pulse, which the latter—praised be her charity—readily did. The faces of the beggar and his wife literally glowed with joy that day, for were they not to taste the long-desired muffins a second time?

The woman soon turned the rice she had been saving and the black pulse she had obtained from her neighbour into a paste, and mixing it well with a little salt, green chillies, coriander seed and curds, set it in a pan on the fire; and with her mouth watering all the while prepared five muffins! By the time her husband had returned from this collection of alms, she was just turning out of the pan the fifth muffin! And when she placed the whole five muffins before him his mouth, too, began to water. He kept two for himself and two he placed before his wife,

but what was to be done with the fifth? He did not understand the way out of this difficulty. That half and half make one and that each could take two and a half muffins was a question too hard for him to solve. The beloved muffins must not be torn in pieces; so he said to his wife that either he or she must take the remaining one. But how were they to decide which should be the lucky one?

Proposed the husband:—"Let us both shut our eyes and stretch ourselves as if in sleep each on a verandah on either side the kitchen. Whoever opens an eye and speaks first gets only two muffins, and the other gets three."

So great was the desire of each to get the three muffins that they both abided by the agreement, and the woman, though her mouth watered for the muffins, resolved to go through the ordeal. She placed the five cakes in a pan and covered it over with another pan. She then carefully bolted the door inside, and asking her husband to go into the east verandah, lay down in the west one. Sleep she had none, and with closed eyes kept guard over her husband: for if he spoke first he would have only two muffins and the other three would come to her share. Equally watchful was her husband over her.

Thus passed one whole day—two—three! The house was never opened! No beggar came to receive the morning dole. The whole village began to enquire after the missing beggar. What had become of him? What had become of his wife? "See whether his house is locked on the outside and whether he has left us to go to some other village," spoke the greyheads. So the village watch came and tried

to push the door open, but it would not open! "Surely," said they, "it is locked on the inside! Some great calamity must have happened. Perhaps thieves have entered the house and after plundering their property murdered the inmates."

"But what property is a beggar likely to have?" thought the village assembly, and not liking to waste time in idle speculations, they sent two watchmen to climb the roof and open the latch from the inside. Meanwhile the whole village—men, women and children—stood before the beggar's house to see what had taken place inside. The watchmen jumped into the house, and to their horror found the beggar and his wife stretched on opposite verandahs like two corpses. They opened the door, and the whole village rushed in. They, too, saw the beggar and his wife lying so still that they thought them to be dead. And though the beggar pair had heard everything that passed around them, neither would open an eye or speak. For whoever did it first would get only two muffins!

At the public expense of the village two green litters of bamboo and cocoanut leaves were prepared on which to remove the unfortunate pair to the cremation-ground. "How loving they must have been to have died together like this!" said some of the greybeards of the village.

In time the cremation-ground was reached, and the village watchmen had collected a score of dried cowdung-cakes and a bundle of firewood from each house for the funeral pyre. From these charitable contributions *two* pyres had been prepared, one for the man and one for the

woman. The pyres were then lighted, and when the fire approached his leg, the man thought it time to give up the ordeal and to be satisfied with only two muffins! So while the villagers were still continuing the funeral rites, they suddenly heard a voice :—

"I shall be satisfied with two muffins!"

Immediately another voice replied from the woman's pyre :—

"I have gained the day ; let me have the three!"

The villagers were amazed and ran away. One bold man alone stood face to face with the supposed dead husband and wife. He was a bold man, indeed, for when a dead man or a man supposed to have died comes to life village people consider him to be a ghost. However, this bold villager questioned the beggars until he came to know their story. He then went after the runaways and related to them the whole story of the five muffins to their great amazement.

But what was to be done to the people who had thus voluntarily faced death out of a love for muffins? Persons who had ascended the green litter and slept on the funeral pyre could never come back to the village! If they did the whole village would perish. So the elders built a small hut, in a deserted meadow outside the village and made the beggar and his wife live there.

Ever after that memorable day our hero and his wife were called the muffin beggar and the muffin beggar's wife and many old ladies and young children from the village used to bring them muffins in the morning and evening, out of pity for them—for had they not loved muffins so much that they underwent death in life?

XXIII

THE BRAHMAN PRIEST WHO BECAME AMILDAR[1]

In the Karnatadesa there reigned a famous king named Chamunda, who was served by a household priest, named Gundappa, well versed in all the rituals at which he officiated.

Chamunda, one day, while chewing betel-leaves, thus addressed Gundappa, who was sitting opposite him :—

" My most holy priest, I am greatly pleased at your faithfulness in the discharge of your sacred duties ; and you may ask of me now what you wish and I shall grant your request."

The priest in his elation replied: "I had always a desire to become the *amildar*[2] "of a district and to exercise power over a number of people; and if Your Majesty should grant me this I have attained my ambition."

" Agreed," said the king, and as at that time the *amildar-ship* of Nanjangod happened to be vacant, His Majesty at once appointed his priest to the post, thinking that a priest, who was so intelligent in his duties, would do well on the new post. Before he sent him off, however, he gave Gundappa three bits of advice.

(1). *Mukha kappage irabeku.*
(2). *Ellaru kevianmu kachchi matan adu.*
(3). *Ellar juttu kayyali irabeku.*

1 A Kanarese tale related by a *risaldar.*
2 A chief revenue officer.

Meaning :--

(1). You should always keep a black (*i. e.*, frowning) countenance.

(2). When you speak about State affairs you should do it biting the ear (*i. e.*, secretly—close to the ear).

(3). The locks of all the people must be in your hand (*i. e.*, you must use your influence and make every one subservient to you.)

Gundappa attended carefully to the advice so kindly given by the king, and the way in which he listened to it made His Majesty understand that he had taken it to heart. So with a smiling face the king gave the letter containing the appointment to Gundappa, who returned home with a happy heart.

He told his wife about the change that had come over his prospects, and wished to start at once to take charge of the new post. The king and his officers at once sent messengers to Nanjangod informing the officers of the *amildari* there that a newly appointed *amildar* would be coming soon. So they all waited near the gate of the town to pay their respects to the new *amildar* and escort him into it.

Gundappa started the very next morning to Nanjangod with a bundle containing clean clothes, six and twelve cubits long, on his head. Poor priest ! Wherever he saw the *kusa* grass on the road, he was drawn to it by its freshness, and kept on storing it up all the way. The sacred grass had become so dear to him, that, though he would have no occasion to use it as *amildar* of Nanjangod, he could not pass by it without gathering some of it. So with his

bundle of clothes on his head and his beloved *kusa* grass in his hands Gundappa approached the city of Nanjangod about the twentieth *ghatika* of the day.

Now, though it was very late in the day none of the officers who had come out to receive the *amildar* had returned home to his meal. Every one was waiting in the gate, and when Gundappa turned up, no one took him to be anything more than a priest. The bundle on his head and the green ritual grass in his hands proclaimed his vocation. But every one thought that, as a priest was coming by the very road the *amildar* would take, he might bring news of him—whether he had halted on the road or might be expected before the evening. So the officer next in rank to the *amildar* came to the most reverend priest and asked him whether he had any news of the coming *amildar* on which our hero put down his bundle and taking the cover out of it—containing the order of his appointment with a handful of *kusa* grass, lest his clothes be polluted if he touched them with his bare hands, informed his subordinate that he was himself the *amildar !*

All those assembled were astonished to find that such a stupid priest was appointed to so responsible a post, but when it was made known that Gundappa was the new *amildar* the customary music was played, and he was escorted in a manner due to his position into the town. He had been fasting from the morning, and a grand feast was prepared for him in the house of the next senior official, which Gundappa entered to dine and take rest. He there informed the officials that he would be at the office at the twenty-fifth *ghatika* of the evening. From the

way in which he issued the order all thought that he was really an able man, and that he had come in the guise of a simple priest in order to find out the real state of his district. So every officer went home, bathed, ate his meal in haste and attended at the office.

The chief assistant took the *amildar* to his house, and entertained his guest as became his position. Gundappa, being a priest, was a very good eater, for never for a day in his life he had spent money out of his own pocket on meals, so what reason had he to enquire about the price of provisions? It was at the expense of others he had grown so fat! After doing more than full justice to all the good things, much to the secret amusement of his host and assistant, Gundappa rose up from his food, and washed his hands. He then wanted betel-leaves, though to ask for these before the host offers them is very impolite. But his subordinate interpreted it as an order from a master and brought the platter containing the necessary nutmeg, mace, nuts, leaves, and *chunam* (lime).

Where is the *dakshina* ?[3] next asked the *amildar*. Hi host did not quite understand whether this was meant in earnest or in joke, but before he could solve the question in his mind :—

"Where is the *dakshina* ?" reiterated the *amildar*, and his assistant, thinking that his new superior was prone to taking bribes, at once brought a bag containing 500 *mohars* and placed it in the platter. Now, a *dakshina* to a Brahman is not usually more than a couple of rupees ; but should an *amildar* ask for one his assistant would naturally mistake him, and think he was hinting at a bribe !

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[3] *Dakshina* (fee given in donation to Brahmans) is ordinarily give to priests after feasting them.

Gundappa, greatly pleased at a princely *dakshina* such as he had never seen before in all his life, at once opened the bag and counted out every gold piece in it, carefully tying them up in his bundle. He then began to chew his betel, and at one gulp swallowed up all the nutmeg and mace in the platter! These acts made his assistant strongly suspect the real nature of the new *amildar*; but then there was the order of the king, and it must be obeyed!

Gundappa next asked his assistant to go on in advance of him to the office, saying that he would be there himself in a *ghatika*. The assistant accordingly left a messenger to attend on the *amildar*, and being very anxious to see things in good order left his house for the office.

Gundappa now remembered the three bits of advice given by the king, the first of which was that he should always put on when in office, a black countenance. Now he understood the word "black" in its literal sense and not in its allegorical one of "frowning," and so, going into the kitchen he asked for a lump of charcoal paste. When this was ready he blackened the whole of his face with it, and covering his face with his cloth,—as he was ashamed to show it,—entered the office. With his face thus blackened and partly covered with a cloth the new *amildar* came and took his seat. Now and then he would remove the cloth from his eyes to see how his officers were working, and meanwhile all the clerks and others present were laughing in their sleeves at the queer conduct of their chief.

The evening was drawing to a close, and there were certain orders to be signed. So taking them all in his

hand the assistant approached the *amildar* and stood at a respectful distance. Gundappa, however, asked him to come nearer, and nearer the assistant came.

"Still nearer," said Gundappa, and nearer still came the assistant.

The second bit of advice from the king now rushed into the *amildar's* mind that he should bite the ears of his officials when he enquired into State affairs, and as Gundappa's want of sense always made him take what was said literally, he opened his mouth and bit the ear of his assistant, while in a muffled voice he asked him whether all his people enjoyed full prosperity! The assistant, now in very fear of his life, roared out that all the people were in the fullest prosperity. But Gundappa would not let go his ear till the poor assistant had roared out the answer more than twenty times. The assistant's ear soon began to swell enormously, and leaving the office in disgust, he started to report to the king the insane acts of the new *amildar*.

Two out of the three bits of advice from the king had now been duly obeyed, but the third—that the locks of all the people must be in his hands—remained unfulfilled, and Gundappa wished to carry out that also quickly. Night had now set in, and as the *amildar* still remained in his seat all his officers were compelled to do the same. In this way the tenth *ghatika* of the night approached, and still the *amildar* would not get up, but sat with his black face secured in his cloth now, and then peeping out to see whether they were all asleep or awake. The fact was he was waiting for an opportunity to have all the locks of his officers in his

hands! As soon as all his officers fell asleep he intended to cut off all their locks, understanding as usual the words of the king in their literal sense! At about midnight, never dreaming of the stupid act that the *amildar* was contemplating in his mind, every one fell asleep, and Gundappa rose up and with a pair of scissors cut off all the locks of his officers. He then tied them all up in a bundle and returned to his assistant's house late at night, where the servants gave him something to eat; after which he started with his bag of *mohars* and bundle of locks to his king to inform him of how well he had obeyed his orders!

In the early morning he reached the presence of His Majesty only a *nimisha* (minute) after the assistant had arrived. Seeing the *amildar* the poor wretch was too afraid to lodge any complaint, but his swollen ear drew the attention of every eye in the assembly.

Gundappa now stood before the king with the charcoal still on his face and said:—

"Most noble king, you ordered me to blacken my face for my new duties. See, I have not even yet removed the dye! You ordered me next only to speak while biting an ear. Look, please, at my assistant's ear, who stands before you and tell me whether I have not obeyed you!! And as for having the locks of my officers in my hands; why here they are in this bundle!!!

Never before had the king seen an instance of such remarkable stupidity, and the thought that Gundappa had shorn so many respectable heads of their locks, and had really bitten the ear of a worthy gentleman, brought much

shame to his heart. He begged the pardon of the injured man and from that day forward was ever careful in the choice of his officers! Poor Gundappa, was dismissed even from the priestship, and his belly grew lean from having no longer the privilege of eating rich food at another's cost!

XXIV

THE GARDENER'S CUNNING WIFE

In a certain village there lived with his wife a poor gardener, who cultivated vegetables in a small patch in the backyard of his house. They were in thirty little beds, half of which he would water every day. This occupied him from the fifth to the fifteenth *ghatika*.

His wife used to cut a basketful of vegetables every evening, and he took them in the mornings to sell in the village. The sale brought him a measure or two of rice, and on this the family lived! If he could manage any extra work of an evening he got a few coppers, which served to meet their other expenses.

Now, in that village there was a temple to Kali, in front of which was a fine tank with a mango tree on its bank. The fish in the tank and the mangoes from the tree were dedicated to the goddess, and were strictly forbidden to the villagers. If any one was discovered cutting a mango or catching a fish he was at once excommunicated from the village. So strict was the prohibition.

The gardener was returning home one morning after selling his vegetables and passed by the temple. The mangoes, so carefully guarded by religious protection, were hanging on the tree in great numbers, and the gardener's eyes fell on them! His mouth watered. He looked round about him, and fortunately there was no one by, at least, as far as his eyes could reach. So he hastily plucked one of the mangoes and with nimble feet descended into the tank to

wash it. Just then a most charming shoal of fish met his eyes. These protected dwellers in the tank had no notion of danger, and so were frolicking about at their ease. The gardener looked about him first and finding no one by caught half a dozen stout fish at one plunge of his hand. He hid them and the mango underneath the rice in his basket and returned home, happy in the thought that he had not been caught. Now he had a special delight in fish, and when he reached his house he showed what he brought to his wife and asked her to prepare a dish with the newly caught fish and the never-till-then tasted mango.

Meanwhile he had to water his garden, and went to the backyard for the purpose. The watering was done by a *pikota*. He used to run up and down the pole while a friend of his, the son of his neighbour, lifted the water and irrigated the garden.

Meanwhile his wife cooked the dish of mango and fish in a pan, and found the flavour so sweet that even while the dish was only half cooked she began to taste one bit after another till more than half had already gone down her throat! The dish was at last cooked and the few remaining slices in the pan were taken off the fire, so she went into the verandah and from thence saw her husband running up and down the *pikota*. She beckoned to him that the dish was ready and that he should come in and taste it. However, he never noticed her, but kept on running up and down the *pikota*, and while doing so he was obliged to wave his hands about, and this his wife mistook as an indication that she might eat up her portion of the dish. At any rate her imagination made her think so ; and she went in and ate a slice, and then

went out into the verandah again to call her husband, who was still running up and down the *pikota*. Again, her husband, so she thought, waved his hands in permission to go on with her dinner. Again she went in and had another slice. Thus it went on for a full *ghatika* till the last slice was consumed!

"Alas!" thought she, "With what great eagerness my husband fetched the fish and the mango and how sadly, out of greediness, have I disappointed him! Surely his anger will know no bounds when he comes in. I must soon devise some means to save myself."

So, she brought the pan in which she cooked the fish and mango out of the house and covered it with another pan of similar size and sat down before it. Then she undid her hair and twisted it about her head until it was dishevelled. She then began to make a great noise. This action by a woman in an illiterate family of low caste is always supposed to indicate a visitation from a goddess or a demon: so when her husband from the *pikota* tree saw the state of his wife, his guilty conscience smote him. The change in his wife alarmed him, and he came down suddenly and stood before her. As soon as she saw him she roared out at him:—

"Why have you injured me to-day by plundering my mango and fish? How dare you do such an irreligious act? You shall soon see the results of your impertinence!"

"The goddess has come upon my wife most terribly," thought the poor man. "Her divine power may soon kill her! What shall I do?"

So he fell at the feet of the divine visitation, as he thought it to be, and said: "My most holy goddess, your

dog of a servant has this day deviated from the straight path. Excuse him this time, and he will never do so a second time."

"Run then with the pan which contains the results of your sin and dip it deep into my tank. Then shall the fish become alive and the mango shall take its place in the tree."

The gardener received the order most submissively, and taking the pan in his hand flew to the tank. There he dipped it in the water and came back to his house fully believing that his sin that day had been forgiven, and that the cooked fish had become alive again and the mango a living one. Thus did the cunning wife save herself from her husband's wrath!

XXV

CHANDRALEKHA AND THE EIGHT ROBBERS

There was an ancient city named Kaivalyam, in the Pandiya country, and in that city there lived a dancing-girl named Muttumohana. She was an excellent gem of womankind, for though born of the dancing-girls' caste, she was a very learned and pious woman, and never would she taste her food without first going and worshipping in the temple to Siva. She moved in the society of kings, ministers and Brahmans, and never mingled with low people, however rich they might be. She had a daughter named Chandralekha, whom she put to school along with the sons of kings, ministers and Brahmans. Chandralekha showed signs of very great intelligence, even when she was beginning her alphabet, so that the master took the greatest care with her tuition, and in less than four years she began her lessons and became a great *pandita*. However, as she was only a dancing-girl by birth, there was no objection to her attending to her studies in open school till she attained to maturity, and, accordingly, up to that age she attended the school and mastered the four *Vedas*, the six *Sastras* and the sixty-four varieties of knowledge.

She then ceased to attend the school, and Muttumohana said to her:—"My darling daughter! For the last seven or eight years you have been taking lessons under the Brahman, your master, in the various departments of knowledge, and you must now pay a large fee to remunerate

your master's labours in having taught you so much. You are at liberty to take as much money as you please from my hoard."

So saying she handed over the key to her daughter, and Chandralekha, delighted at her mother's sound advice, filled up five baskets with five thousand *mohars* in each, and setting them on the heads of five maid-servants, went to her master's house with betel-leaves, arecanut, flowers and cocoanuts in a platter in her hand, to be presented along with the money. The servants placed the baskets before the master and stood outside the house, while, Chandralekha took the dish of betel-leaves, nuts, etc., and humbly prostrated herself on the ground before him. Then, rising up, she said: "My most holy *guru* (master), great are the pains your holiness undertook in instructing me and thus destroying the darkness of my ignorance. For the last eight years I have been a regular student under your holiness and all the branches of knowledge hath your holiness taught me. Though what I offer might be insufficient for the pains your holiness took in my case, still I humbly request your holiness to accept what I have brought."

Thus said she, and respectfully pushed the baskets of *mohars* and the betel-nut platter towards the Brahman. She expected to hear benedictions from her tutor, but in that we shall see she was soon disappointed.

Replied the wretched Brahman: "My dear Chandralekha! Do you not know that I am the tutor of the prince, the minister's son and several others of great wealth in Kaivalyam? Of money I have more than enough. I do

not want a single *mohar* from you. But what I want is that you should marry[1] me".

Thus spoke the shameless teacher, and Chandralekha's face changed colour. She was horrified to hear such a suggestion from one whom she took till then to be an incarnation of perfection. But, still hoping to convince him of the unjustness of the request, she said: "My most holy master! The deep respect I entertain towards your holy feet is such that, though your holiness's words are plain, I am led to think that they are merely uttered to test my chastity. Does not your holiness know the rules by which a preceptor is to be regarded as a father, and that I thus stand in the relationship of a daughter to your holiness? So kindly forget all that your holiness has said, and accepting what I have brought in my humble state, permit me to go home."

But the wretched teacher never meant anything of the sort. He had spoken in earnest, and his silence now and lascivious look at once convinced the dancing-girl's daughter of what was passing in his mind. So she quickly went out and told her servants to take back the money.

At home Muttumohana was anxiously awaiting the return of her daughter, and as soon as Chandralekha came in without the usual cheerfulness in her face, and without having given the presents, her mother suspected that something had gone wrong, and enquired of her daughter the cause of her gloom. She then related to her mother the whole story of her interview with her old master. Muttumohana was glad to find such a firm heart in her daughter,

1 There would of course be no *real* marriage between a dancing girl and a Brahman. Hence the insult.

and blessed her, saying that she would be wedded to a young husband, and lead a chaste life, though born of the dancing-girl's caste. The money she safely locked up in her room.

Now, the Brahman, in consequence of his disappointment, was very angry with Chandralekha, and, that no young and wealthy gentleman might visit her house, he spread reports that Chandralekha was possessed by a demon (*Kuttichchatti*). So no one approached Chandralekha's house to gain her love, and her mother was much vexed. Her great wish was that some respectable young man should secure her daughter's affections, but the master's rumours stood in the way. And thus a year passed and the belief that a *kuttichchatti* had possessed Chandralekha gained firm ground.

After what seemed to these two to be a long period a sage happened to visit Muttumohani's house and she related to him all her daughter's story. He listened and said: "Since the belief that a demon has taken possession of your daughter has taken firm hold of the citizens, it is but necessary now that she should perform (*puja*) worship to the demon-king on the night of the new-moon of this month in the cremation-ground. Let her do this and she will be all right, for then some worthy young gentleman can secure her affections.

So saying the sage went away, and his advice seemed to be reasonable to the mother. She very well knew that no such demon had possessed her daughter, but that it was all the master's idle report. But still, to wipe away any evil notion in the minds of the people she publicly proclaimed that her daughter would perform *puja* in the

cremation-ground at midnight at the next new-moon. Now, it is always the rule in such rites that the person who is possessed should go alone to the cremation-ground and, accordingly, on the night of the next new moon, Chandralekha went to the burning-ground with a basket containing all the necessary things of worship and a light.

Near Kaivalyam, at a distance of five *kos* from it, was a great forest called *Khandavam*. In it there dwelt eight robbers, who used to commit the greatest havoc in the country round. At the time when Chandralekha proceeded to the cremation-ground, these eight robbers also happened to go there to conceal what they had stolen in the earlier part of that night. Then, being relieved of their burden, they determined to go to some other place to plunder during the latter half of the night also. When Chandralekha heard the sound of footsteps at a distance she feared something wrong, and, covering up her glittering light by means of her empty basket, concealed herself in a hollow place. The thieves came and looked round about them. They found nobody, but fearing that some one might be near, one of them took out an instrument called *kannakkol* and, whirling it round his head threw it towards the east. This *kannakkol*, is the instru-

2 In stories of a master falling in love with the girl he has been teaching, he is usually himself made a soothsayer. In that capacity he asks the guardian (father or mother) to put the girl in a light box and to float her down a river. The girl in the box is taken by a young man, sometimes a prince, and becomes his wife. A tiger or a lion is then put into the box, and when the teacher, a great way down the river, takes the box and wishes to run away with the girl inside, he is torn to pieces, as a fit reward for his evil intentions, by the beast. But here the story takes a different turn.

ment by which these robbers bore holes in walls and enter buildings, and some robbers say they get it from a thunder-bolt. During a stormy day they make a large heap of cow-dung into which a thunder-bolt falls and leaves a rod in the middle, which is so powerful that it can bore even through stone-walls without making any noise. It has also the attribute of obeying its master's orders. So when the chief of the eight robbers threw his *kannakkol* towards the east, true to its nature, it came into the hole in which Chandralekha was lurking, and began to pierce her in her back. As soon as she felt it, she dragged it out by both her hands without making the slightest noise, and, throwing it under her feet, stood firmly over it. The robbers, having concealed the eight boxes of wealth they had brought with them in the sands near the cremation-ground, went away to spend the remaining part of the night usefully in their own fashion.

As soon as the robbers had left the place Chandralekha came out, and, taking possession of the robbers' rod took out the eight boxes that the robbers had buried. With these she quickly hastened home, where her mother was awaiting her return. She soon made her appearance, and related all that had occurred during the night to her mother. They soon removed the contents of the boxes and locked them up safely. Then, taking the empty boxes she filled them up with stones, old iron and other useless materials, and, arranging them two and two by the side of each leg of her cot, went to sleep on it.

As the night was drawing to a close, the robbers, with still more booty, came to the ground, and were thunderstruck when they missed their boxes. But as the

day was dawning they went away into the jungle, leaving the investigation of the matter to the next night. They were astonished at the trick that had been played upon them and were very anxious to find out the thief who had outwitted thieves. Now they were sure that their boring-rod, which they had aimed against the unknown person who might be lurking in the *smasanam* (cremation-ground) must have wounded him. So one of them assumed the guise of an ointment-seller,[3] and, with some ointment in a cocoanut-bottle, began to walk the streets of Kaivalyam city, crying out "Ointment to sell. The best of ointments to cure new wounds and old sores. Please buy my ointment." And the other seven thieves assumed seven different disguises and also went wandering round the streets of the city. A maid-servant of Chandralekha had seen that her mistress was suffering from the effects of a wound in her back, and never suspecting a thief in the medicine-seller, called out to the ointment-man, and took him inside the house. She then informed Chandralekha that she had brought in an ointmentman, and that she would do well to buy a little of his medicine for her wound. The clever Chandralekha at once recognised the thief in the medicine-vendor, and he too, as he was a very cunning brute, recognised in the young lady the thief of his boxes, and found her wound to be that made by his boring-rod. They soon parted company. The lady bought a little ointment, and the thief in disguise, gladly giving a little of his precious stuff from his cocoanut bottle, went away. The eight thieves had

3 From this point up to the end we shall find the story to be similar to "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" in the *Arabian Nights*, though the plot is different.

appointed a place outside Kaivalyam for their rendezvous, and there they learnt who had robbed them of their treasure. Not wishing to remain idle, they chose that very night both to break into Chandralekha's house and bring away herself and their boxes.

Chandralekha, too, was very careful. She locked up all the treasures and kept the eight boxes filled with rubbish, so as to correspond with their original weights, under the cot on which she slept, or rather pretended to sleep, that night. The thieves in due course made a hole into her bedroom and entered. They found her to all appearance sound asleep, and to their still greater joy they found beneath her cot their eight boxes.

"The vixen is asleep. Let us come to-morrow night and take her away; but first let us remove our boxes." So saying to each other, they took their boxes, each placing one on his head, and returned in haste to their cave which they reached early in the morning. But when they opened the boxes to sort out their booty, astonishment of astonishments, their eyes met only broken pieces of stone, lumps of iron and other such rubbish. Every one of them placed his forefinger at right angles to the tip of his nose, and exclaimed:—"Ah! A very clever girl. She has managed to deceive us all. But let this day pass. We shall see whether she will not fall into our hands to-night."

Thus, in wonder and amazement, they spent the whole day. Nor was Chandralekha idle at her own house. She was sure she would again see the robbers in her room that night, and, in order to be prepared for the occasion, she made a small sharp knife out of the robber's rod and kept it beneath her pillow, in the place where she was accustom-

ed to keep her purse containing a few betel leaves, nuts, *chunam*, etc., to chew. The night came on. Early Chandralekha had her supper and retired to bed. Sleep she could not, but she cunningly kept her eyelids closed and pretended to sleep. Even before it was midnight the eight thieves broke into her room, saying to themselves:—"This clever lady-thief sleeps soundly. We will do her no mischief here. Let us range ourselves two and two at each leg of her cot and carry her away unconscious to the woods. There we can all ravish her and kill her."

Thus thinking, the eight thieves ranged themselves at the side of the four legs of the cot, and, without the slightest shaking, removed the cot with the sleeper on it outside the town. Their joy in thus having brought away their enemy was very great, and, not fearing for the safe custody of their prisoner, they marched to their cave. Meanwhile Chandralekha was not idle on the cot. The way to the jungle was through a long and fine avenue of mango trees. It was the mango season, and all the branches were hanging with bunches of ripe and unripe fruit. To make up for her weight on the cot she kept plucking mango bunches and heaping them on it, and as soon as a quantity which she thought would make up her weight was upon the cot, she without the slightest noise took hold of a branch and lifted herself up from off it. The thieves walked on as before, the weight on their heads not apparently diminishing, leaving our heroine safely seated on a mango branch to pass the few remaining *ghatikas* of that anxious night there. The thieves reached their cave just at daybreak, and when they placed their burden down their eyes met only bunches of ripe mangoes, and not the lady they looked for. "Is she a woman of flesh

and blood or is she a devil?" asked the chief of the next in rank.

"My lord! She is a woman fast enough, and if we search in the wood we shall find her," replied he, and at once all the eight robbers after a light breakfast began to search for her.

Meanwhile the morning dawned upon Chandralekha and let her see that she was in the midst of a thick jungle. She feared to escape in the daytime as the way was long, and she was sure that the robbers would soon be after her. So she resolved to conceal herself in some deep ambush, and wait for the night. Before she left the cot for the mango branch she had secured in her hip the small knife she had made for herself out of the robber's rod and the purse containing the materials for chewing betel; and near the tree into which she had climbed she saw a deep hollow surrounded by impenetrable reeds on all sides. So she slowly let herself down from the tree into this hollow, and anxiously waited there for the night.

All this time the eight thieves were searching for her in different places, and one of them came to the spot where Chandralekha had sat in the tree, and the dense bushes near made him suspect that she was hidden there; so he proceeded to examine the place by climbing up the tree. When Chandralekha saw the thief on the tree she gave up all hopes of life. But suddenly a bright thought came into her mind, just as the man up above saw her. Putting on a most cheerful countenance she slowly spoke to him: "My dear husband, for I must term you so from this moment, since God has elevated you now to that position, do not raise an alarm. Come down here gently

that we may be happy in each other's company. You are my husband and I am your wife from this moment."

So spoke the clever Chandralekha, and the head of the thief began to turn with joy when he heard so sweet a speech, and, forgetting all of her previous conduct to himself and his brethren, he leapt into the hollow. She welcomed him with a smiling face, in which the eager heart of the robber read sincere affection, and gave him some betel-nut to chew and chewed some herself merrily. Now redness of the tongue after chewing betel is always an indication of the mutual affection of a husbsnd and wife among the illiterate of Hindu society. So while the betel-leaf was being chewed she put out her tongue to show the thief how red it was, letting him see thereby how deeply she loved him: and he, to show in return how deeply he loved her, put out his tongue too. And she, as if examining it closely, clutched it in her left hand, while with her right hand in the twinkling of an eye cut off the tongue and nose of the robber, and taking advantage of the confusion that came over him she cut his throat and left him dead.

By this time evening was fast approaching, and the other seven robbers, after fruitless search, returned to their cave, feeling sure that the eighth man must have discovered Chandralekha. They waited and waited the whole night but no one returned, for how could a man who had been killed come back?

Our heroine, meanwhile, as soon as evening set in, started homewards, being emboldened by the occasion and the circumstances in which she was placed. She reached home safely at midnight and related all her

adventures to her mother. Overcome by exhaustion she slept the rest of the night and as soon as morning dawned began to strengthen the walls of her bedroom by iron plates. To her most useful pocket-knife she now added bagful of powdered chillies and went to bed, not to sleep, but to watch for the robbers. Just as she expected, a small hole was bored in the east wall of her bedroom, and one of the seven robbers thrust in his head. As soon as she saw the hole our heroine stood by the side of it with the powder and knife, and with the latter she cut off the nose of the man who peeped in and thrust the powder into the wound. Unable to bear the burning pain he dragged himself back uttering "*na, na, na, na,*" having now no nose to pronounce properly with. A second thief, abusing the former for having lost his nose so carelessly, went in, and the bold lady inside dealt in the same way with his nose, and he too, dragged himself back in the same way, calling out "*na, na, na, na.*" A third thief abused the second in his turn, and going in lost his nose also. Thus all the seven thieves lost their noses, and, fearing to be discovered if they remained, ran off to the forest, where they had to take a few days' rest from their plundering habits to cure their mutilated noses.

Chandralekha had thus three or four times disappointed the thieves. The more she disappointed them the more she feared for her own safety, especially as she had now inflicted a lifelong shame on them. "The thieves will surely come as soon as their noses are cured and kill me in some way or other. I am, after all, only a girl," she thought to herself. So she went at once to the palace and reported all her adventures with the eight robbers to

the prince, who had been her former class-mate. The prince was astonished at the bravery of Chandralekha and promised the next time the robbers came to lend her his assistance. So every night a spy from the palace slept in Chandralekha's house to carry the news of the arrival of the robbers to the prince should they ever go there. But the robbers were terribly afraid of approaching Chandralekha's house after they came to know that she had a knife made out of the boring-rod. But they devised among themselves a plan of inviting Chandralekha to the forest on the pretence of holding a *nautch* and sent to her house a servant for that purpose. The servant came, and, entering Chandralekha's house, spoke thus to her: "My dear young lady, whoever you may be, you have now a chance of enriching yourself. I see plainly from the situation of your house that you are one of the dancing-girls' caste. My masters in the forest have made a plan to give a *nautch* to their relatives on the occasion of a wedding which is to take place there the day after to-morrow. If you come there they will reward you with a *karor* of *mohars* for every *nimisha* (minute) of your performance." Thus spoke the servant, and Chandralekha, knowing that the mission was from the thieves, agreed to perform *nautch*, and, asking the man to come and take her and her party the next morning to the forest, sent him away.

In order to lose no time she went at once to the prince and told him all about the *nautch*. Said she, "I know very well that this is a scheme of the thieves to kill me, but before they can do that we must try to kill them. A way suggests itself to me in this wise. To make up a *nautch girl's* party more than seven persons are required. One must play the drum; a second must sound the cymbals;

a third must blow upon the *nagasvara* pipe, etc. So I request you to give me seven of your strongest men to accompany me disguised as men of my party, and some of your troops must secretly lie in ambush in readiness to take the robbers prisoners when a signal is given to them."

Thus Chandralekha spoke, and all her advice the prince received with great admiration. He offered himself as her drummer for the *nautch*, and he chose six of the ablest commanders from his army and asked them to disguise themselves as fiddlers, pipers, etc., and he directed an army of a thousand men to follow their footsteps at a distance of two *ghatikas'* march, and to lie in ambush near the place where they were going to perform the *nautch* ready for a call. Thus everything was arranged and all were ready by the morning to start from Chandralekha's house. Before the third *ghatika* of the morning was over, the robbers' servant came to conduct Chandralekha with her party to the forest where the prince and six of his strongest men disguised as her followers, were waiting for him. Chandralekha with all her followers accompanied him, but as soon as she left her house a spy ran off to the army, which, as ordered by the prince, began to follow her party at a distance of two *ghatikas*.

After travelling a long way Chandralekha and her party reached the *nautch* pavilion at about five *ghatikas* before sunset. All their hosts were without their noses, and some still had their noses bandaged up. When they saw that Chandralekha's followers had a fine prepossessing appearance, even the hard hearts of the robbers softened a little.

"Let us have a look at her performance. She is now entirely in our possession. Instead of murdering her now, we will witness her performance for a *ghatika*," said the robbers to each other; and all with one voice said "agreed," and at once the order for the performance was given.

Chandralekha, who was clever in every department of knowledge, began her performance, and by the most exquisite movement of her limbs held the audience spell-bound, when suddenly *ta tai tom* clashed the cymbals. This was the signal for the destruction of the robbers, as well as the sign of the close of a part of the *nautch*. In the twinkling of an eye the seven disguised followers of the dancing-girl had thrown down the thieves and were upon them. Before the servants of the robbers could come to the help of their masters the footsteps of an army near were heard, and in no time the prince's one thousand men were on the spot and took all the robbers and their followers prisoners.

So great had been the ravages of these robbers in and around Kaivalyam that, without any mercy being shown to them, they and their followers were all ordered to be beheaded, and the prince was so much won over by the excellent qualities of Chandralekha that, notwithstanding her birth as a dancing girl, he regarded her a gem of womankind and married her.

"Buy a girl in a *bazar*" (*kanniyai kadaiyiorkol*) is a proverb. What matter where a girl is born provided she is chaste! And Chandralekha by her excellent virtue won a prince for her lord. And when that lord came to know of the real nature of his teacher, who was also the teacher of Chandralekha, he banished him from his kingdom, as a merciful punishment, in consideration of his previous services.

XXVI

THE CONQUEST OF FATE

In the Dakshinadesa there lived a Brahman boy who from his childhood was given a very liberal education in Sanskrit. He had read so much in philosophy that before he reached the sixteenth year of his life he began to despise the pleasures of the world. Everything which he saw was an illusion (*mithya*) to him. So he resolved to renounce the world and to go to a forest, there to meet with some great sage, and pass his days with him in peace and happiness.

Having thus made up his mind, he left his home one day without the knowledge of his parents and travelled towards the Dandakaranya. After wandering for a long time in that impenetrable forest, and undergoing all the miseries of a wood inhabited only by wild beasts, he reached the banks of the Tungabhadra. His sufferings in his wanderings in a forest untrodden by human feet, his loneliness in the midst of wild beasts, his fears whether after all he had not failed in his search for consolation in a preceptor to teach him the higher branches of philosophy, came up one after another before his mind. Rejected and weary, he cast his glance forward as far as it could reach. Was it a reality or only imagination ? He saw before him a lonely cottage of leaves (*parnasala*). To a lonely traveller even the appearance of shelter

is welcome, so he followed up his vision till it became a reality, and an aged hoary Brahman, full four-score and more in years, welcomed our young philosopher.

"What has brought you here, my child, to this lonely forest thus alone ?" spoke in a sweet voice the hoary lord of the cottage of leaves.

"A thirst for knowledg so that I may acquire the mastery over the higher branches of philosophy," was the reply of our young adventurer, whose name was Subrahmanya.

"Sit down my child," said the old sage, much pleased that in this Kaliyuga, which is one long epoch of sin, there was at least one young lad who had forsaken his home for philosophy.

Having thus seen our hero safely relieved from falling a prey to the tigers and lions of the Dandakaranya, let us enquire into the story of the old sage. In the good old days even of this Kaliyuga, learned people, after fully enjoying the world, retired to the forests, with or without their wives, to pass the decline of life in solemn solitude and contemplation. When they went with their wives they were said to undergo the *vanaprastha* stage of family life. The hoary sage of our story was undergoing *vanaprastha*, for he was in the woods with his wife. His name while living was Jnananidhi. He had built a neat *parnasala* or cottage of leaves, on the banks of the commingled waters of the Tunga and Bhadra, and here his days and nights were spent in meditation. Though old in years he retained the full vigour of manhood, the result of a well-spent youth. The life of his later years was most simple and sinless.

> "Remote from man, with God he passed his days ;
> Prayer all his business, all his pleasures praise."

The wood yielded him herbs, fruits and roots, and the river, proverbial[1] for its sweet waters, supplied him with drink. He lived, in fact, as simply as the bard who sang

> "But from the mountain's grassy side
> A guiltless feast I bring ;
> A bag with herbs and fruits supplied,
> And water from the spring."

His faithful wife brought him these, while Jnananidhi, himself devoted his whole time to the contemplation of God.

Such was Jnananidhi—the abode of all knowledge—to whom the boy-philosopher, Subrahmanya, resorted. After questioning each other both were mightily pleased at the fortune which had brought them together. Jnananidhi was glad to impart his hard-earned knowledge during his leisure moment to the young student, and Subrahmanya, with that longing which made him renounce the city and take to the woods, eagerly swallowed and assimilated whatever was administered to him. He relieved his mother—for as such he regarded his master's wife—of all her troubles, and used, himself, to go out to bring the fruits, herbs and roots necessary for the repasts of the little family. Thus passed five years, by which time our young friend had become learned in the many branches of Aryan philosophy.

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[1]*ganga snana tunga pana.* The Ganges for bath and Tunga (Tungabhadra) for drink.

Jnananidhi had a desire to visit the source of the Tungabhadra, but his wife was eight months advanced in her pregnancy. So he could not take her; and to take care of her he had to leave behind his disciple, Subrahmanya. Thus, after commending the old lady to Subrahmanya's care, and leaving for female assistance another sage's wife, whom he had brought from a distant forest, Jnananidhi went his way.

The time for confinement was fast approaching, and the old lady even felt the pangs of labour. Her attendant remained with her inside the cottage, while Subrahmanya sat outside anxiously waiting to hear that his master's wife had been safely brought to bed.

Now, there is a strong belief among Hindus that Brahma, the great creator, writes on everyone's head at the time of his birth his future fortunes in life. He is supposed to do this just at the moment of birth, when the child leaves the womb of its mother and enters the world. Of course, the great God when he enters the room to discharge his onerous duty, is invisible to all human eyes. But the eyes of Subrahmanya were not exactly human. The supreme knowledge which Jnananidhi had imparted to him made it easy for him to discern at once a person entering most impolitely the room in which his master's wife was being confined.

"Let your reverence stop here," said the disciple angrily though respectfully. The great God shuddered, for he had been in the habit of entering hourly innumerable buildings on his eternal rounds of duty, but never till then had a human being perceived him and asked him to stop. His wonder knew no measure, and as he stood bewildered the

following reprimand fell on his ears: "Hoary Brahman sage (for so Brahma appeared), it is unbecoming your age thus to enter the hut of my master, unallowed by me, who am watching here. My teacher's wife is in labour. Hold your steps."

Brahma hastily—for the time of inscribing the future fortune on the forehead of the baby to be born was fast approaching—explained to Subrahmanya who he was and what had brought him there. As soon as our young hero came to know the person who stood before him he rose up, and, tying his upper cloth round his hips as a mark of respect, went round the Creator thrice, fell down before Brahma's most holy feet and begged his pardon. Brahma had not much time. He wanted to go in at once, but our young friend would not leave the God until he explained what he meant to write on the head of the child. "My son!" said Brahma, "I myself do not know what my iron nail will write on the head of the child. When the child is coming into the world I place the nail on its head, and the instrument writes the fate of the baby in proportion to its good or bad acts in its former life. To delay me is merely wrong. Let me go in."

"Then," said Subrahmanya, "Your Holiness must inform me when Your Holiness goes out what has been written on the child's head." "Agreed," said Brahma and went in. After a moment he returned, and our young hero at the door asked the God what his nail had written.

"My child!" said Brahma, "I will inform you what it wrote; but if you disclose it to anyone your head will split into a thousand pieces. The child is a male child. It has before it a very hard life. A buffalo and a sack of

grain will be its livelihood. What is to be done? Perhaps it had not done any good acts in its former life, and as the result of its sin then it must undergo miseries now."

"What! Your supreme Holiness, the father of this child is a great sage?" wept the true disciple of the sage.

What have I to do with the matter? The fruits of acts in a former life must be undergone in the present life. But, remember, if you should reveal this news to anyone your head will split into a thousand pieces."

Having said this Brahma went away, leaving Subrahmanya extremely pained to hear that the son of a great sage was to have a hard life. He could not even open his lips on the subject, for if he did his head would be split. In sorrow he passed some days, when Jnananidhi returned from his pilgrimage and was delighted to see his wife and the child doing well. And in the learned company of the old sage our young disciple forgot all his sorrow.

Three more years passed away in deep study, and again the old sage wanted to go on a pilgrimage to the sacred source of the Tungabhadra. Again was his wife pregnant, and he had to leave her and his disciple behind with the usual temporary female assistance. Again, too, did Brahma come at the moment of birth, but found easy admittance as Subrahmanya had now become acquainted with him owing to the previous confinement. Again did Brahma take an oath from him not to communicate the fortunes of the second child, with the curse that if he broke his oath his head would split into a thousand pieces. This child was a female, and the nail had written that her fate was to be that of a courtezan! She would obtain her

living after her attaining maturity by prostitution. Extremely vexed was our young philosopher. The most shameful and sinful life of lives was to be the lot of a daughter of a most holy sage. The thought vexed him to such a degree that language has no words to express it. After worrying a great deal he consoled himself with the soothing philosophies of the fatalists that fate alone governs the world.

The old sage in due course returned, and our young disciple spent two more happy years with him. After a little more than ten years had been thus spent the boy reached to five years and the girl to two. The more they advanced in years the more did the recollection of their future fate pain Subrahmanya. So one morning he humbly requested the old sage to permit him to go on a long journey to the Himalayas and other mountains, and Jnananidhi, knowing that all that he knew had been grasped by the young disciple, permitted him with a glad heart to satisfy his curiosity.

Our hero started, and after several years, during which he visited several towns and learned men, reached the Himalayas. There he saw many sages, and lived with them for some time. He did not remain in one place, for his object was more to examine the world. So he went from place to place, and after a long and interesting journey of twenty years he again returned to the banks of the Tungabhadra, at the very place where he lived for ten years and imbibed philosophical knowledge from Jnananidhi. But he saw there neither Jnananidhi nor his old wife. They had long since fallen a prey to the lord of death. Much afflicted at heart to see his master and mistress no more,

he went to th neearest town, and there after a deal of search he found a coolie with a single buffalo. The fate which Brahma's nail had written on his master's son rushed into the mind of Subrahmanya. He approached the coolie, and, on closely examining him from a distance, our hero found distinct indications of his master's face in the labourer. His pain knew no bounds to see the son of a great sage thus earning his livelihood out of a buffalo. He followed him to his home, and found that he had a wife and two children. One sack of corn he had in his house and no more, from which he took out a portion every day and gave it to his wife to be shelled. The rice was cooked, and with the petty earnings of a coolie, he and his family kept body and soul together. Each time he corn in the sack became exhausted he used to be able to save enough to replenish it again with corn. Thus did he, according to the writing of Brahma's nail, pass his days. Kapali was the name of this coolie, the sage's son.

"Do you know me, Kapali?" said our hero, as he remembered his name.

The coolie was astonished to hear his name so readily pronounced by one who was apparently a stranger to him, but he said, " I am sorry that I do not know you, sir."

Subrahmanya then explained to him who he was and requested him to follow his advice. "My dear son, do as I bid you. Early morning to-morrow leave your bed and take to the market your buffalo and the cornsack. Dispose of them for whatever amount they will fetch you. Do not think twice about the matter. Buy all that is necessary for a sumptuous meal from the sale proceeds and eat it all up at once without reserving a morsel for the morrow.

You will get a great deal more than you can eat in a day. But do not reserve any, even the smallest portion of it. Feed several other Brahmans with it. Do not think that I advise you for your ruin. You will see in the end that what your father's disciple tells you is for your own prosperity."

However, whatever the sage might say, Kapali could not bring himself to believe him. "What shall I do to feed my wife and children to-morrow if I sell everything belonging to me to-day?" Thus thought Kapali, and consulted his wife.

Now she was a very virtuous and intelligent woman. Said she, "My dear lord, we have heard that your father was a great *mahatma*. This disciple must equally be a *mahatma*. His holiness would not advise us to our ruin. Let us follow the sage's advice."

When Kapali's wife thus supported the sage he resolved to dispose of his beast and sack the next morning, and he did so accordingly. The provisions he bought were enough to feed fifty Brahmans morning and evening as well as his own family. So that day he fed Brahmans for the first time in his life. Night came on, and after an adventurous day Kapali retired to sleep, but sleep he could not. Meanwhile Subrahmanya was sleeping on the bare verandah outside the house, and he came to the sage and said, "Holy sage, nearly half of the night is spent and there are onely fifteen *ghatikas* more for the dawn. What shall I do for the morow for my hungry children? All that I had I have spent. I have not even a morsel of cold rice for the morning."

Subrahmanya showed him some money that he had in his hand, enough to buy a buffalo and a sack of corn in case the great God did not help him, and asked him to spend that night, at least the remainder of it, in calm sleep. So Kapali with his heart at ease retired to rest.

He had not slept more than ten *ghatikas* when he dreamt that all his family—his wife and children—were screaming for a mouthful of rice. Suddenly he awoke and cursed his poverty which had always made such thoughts dwell uppermost in his mind. There were only five *ghatikas* for the lord of the day to make his appearance in the eastern horizon, and before this could happen he wanted to finish his morning bath and ablutions, and so he went to his garden to bathe at the well. The shed for the buffalo was erected in the garden, and it had been his habit daily before bathing to give fresh straw to his beast. That morning he thought he would be spared that duty. But, wonder of wonders! He saw another buffalo standing there. He cursed his poverty again which imagined things impossible. How could it be possible that his beast should be standing there when he had sold it the previous morning? So he went into the shed and found a real buffalo standing there. He could not believe his eyes, and hastily brought a lamp from his house. It was, however, a real buffalo, and beside it was a sack of corn! His heart leapt with joy, and he ran out to tell his patron, Subrahmanya. But when the latter heard it he said with a disgusted air: "My dear Kapali, why do you care so much? Why do you feel so overjoyed? Take the beast at once with the corn sack and sell them as you did yesterday."

Kapali at once obeyed the orders and changed the money into provisions. Again fifty Brahmans were fed

the next day too, and nothing was reserved for the third day's use. Thus it went on in Kapali's house. Every morning he found a buffalo and a sack of corn, which he sold and fed Brahmans with the proceeds. In this way a month passed. Said Subrahmanya one day, "My dear Kapali, I am your holy father's disciple, and I would never advise you to do a thing prejudicial to your welfare. When I came to know that you were the son of the great sage, Jnananidhi, and were leading so wretched a life, I came to see you in order to alleviate your miseries. I have now done so, having pointed out the way to you to live confortably. Daily must you continue thus. Do as you have been doing for the past one month, and never reserve anything, for if you reserve a portion all this happiness may fail, and you will have to revert to your former wretched life. I have done my duty towards you. If you become ambitious of hoarding up money this fortune may desert you."

Kapali agreed to follow the advice of the sage to the uttermost detail and requested him to remain in his house. Again said Subrahmanya: "My son! I have better work before me than living in your house. So please excuse me. But before leaving you I request you to inform me as to where your sister is. She was a child of two years of age when I saw her twenty years ago. She must be about twenty-two or twenty-three now. Where is she?"

Tears trickled down the eyes of Kapali when his sister was mentioned. Said he, "Do not, my patron, think of her. She is lost to the world. I am ashamed to think of her. Why should we think of such a wretch at this happy time?"

At once the inscription made by Brahma's nail rushed into Subrahmanya's mind and he understood what was meant. Said he, " Never mind ; be open and tell me where she is.''

Then her brother, Kapali, with his eyes still wet with tears, said that his sister, the daughter of the sage Jnananidhi, was leading the worst of lives as a courtezan in an adjoining village, and that her name was Kalyani.

Subrahmanya took leave of Kapali and his wife after blessing his little children and again warning his friend. He had conferred what happiness he could upon his master's son, and now the thought of reforming his master's daughter reigned supreme in his heart. He went at once to the village indicated and reached it at about nightfall. After an easy search he found her house and knocked at the door. The door was at once opened. But on that day she was astonished to see a face such as she could never expect to approach her house.

"Do you know me, Kalyani?" said Subrahmanya, and she in reply said that she did not. He then explained who he was, and when she came to know that it was a disciple of her father that was standing before her she wept most bitterly. The thought that, after having been born of such a holy sage, she had adopted so wretched a life, the most shameful in the world, made her miserable at heart. She fell down at his feet and asked to be forgiven. She then explained to him her extreme misery, and the hard necessity which had compelled her to take to her present way of living. He then consoled her and spoke thus : "My dear daughter ! My heart burns to see that

necessity drove you to this wretched life. But I can redeem you if you will only follow my advice. From this night you had better shut your door, and never open it to any other person except to him who brings to you a large measure full of pearls of the first water. You follow this advice for a day and I shall then advise you further."

Being the daughter of a great sage, and having been compelled by necessity to take to a wretched life, she readily consented to follow the advice of her father's disciple when he promised to redeem her. She bolted the door, and as her customers used to visit her at night several came that night and knocked. To all she stated from within that her condition was a large measure full of pearls. Her visitors, considering she had gone mad, went away. The night was almost drawing to a close and all her customors had gone away disappointed. Who was there in the village to give to her one measure full of pearls ? But as the nail of Brahma had appointed for her such a life as stated, some one was bound to comply with her terms. And as there was no human being who could do so, the God Brahma himself assumed the shape of a young man, and, with a measure full of pearls, visited her in the last watch of the night and remained with her.

When morning dawned he disappeared, and when Kalyani explained to the disciple of her father the next morning that after all one person had visited her with a measure full of pearls on the previous night he was glad to hear of it. He knew that his suggestion was working well. Said he," My dear daughter, you are pure hereafter from this day. There are very few people in this world who could

afford to give you a measure full of pearls every night. So he that brought you the pearls last night must continue to do so every night, and he shall be hereafter your only husband. No other person must ever hereafter see your face, and you must obey my orders. You must sell all the pearls he brings you every day and convert them into money. This money you should spend in feeding the poor and other charities. None of it must you reserve for the next day, neither must you entertain a desire to hoard up money. The day you fail to follow my advice you will lose your husband, and then you will have to fall back on your former wretched life."

Thus said Subrahmanya, and Kalyani agreed to strictly follow his injunctions. He then went to live under a tree opposite to her house for a month to see whether his plan was working well, and found it worked admirably.

Thus, after having conferred happiness, to the best of his abilities, on the son and daughter of his former master, Subrahmanya took leave of Kalyani, and with her permission, most reluctantly given, he pursued his pilgrimage.

One moonlight night, after a long sleep, Subrahmanya rose up almost at midnight, and hearing the crows crowing he mistook it for the dawn and commenced his journey. He had not proceeded far, when on his way he met a beautiful person coming before him, with a sack of corn on his head and a bundle of pearls tied up in the end of his upper cloth on his shoulder, leading a buffalo before him.

"Who are you, sir, walking thus in this forest?" said Subrahmanya.

When thus addressed the person before him threw down the sack and wept most bitterly.

" See, sir, my head is almost become bald by having to bear to Kapali's house a sack of corn every night. This buffalo I lead to Kapali's shed, and this bundle of pearls I take to Kalyani's house. My nail wrote their fate on their respective heads, and by your device I have to supply them with what my nail wrote. When will you relieve me of these troubles?"

Thus wept Brahma, for it was no other personage. He was the Creator and Protector of all beings, and when Subrahmanya had pointed out the way for his master's children and they had conquered fate, Brahma too was conquered. So the great God soon gave them eternal felicity and relieved himself of his troubles.

XXVII
THE REIGN OF LAKSHMI

Far from any city in a retired and unfrequented wood, there lived a hermit who had long taken to a retired life. Little occupation had he, except meditation and contemplation.

One day the Goddess of Prosperity, Lakshmi stood before him and said "Holy Sir, I have come to reign in you."

"Who are you?" said the sage.

"Lakshmi," said the goddess.

"Of what use are you to me, who have renounced the world?" asked the sage.

"I must abide with you for some time. It is so written in your destiny. Therefore accept me," spoke the goddess.

"If so," said the sage, "as you came to me after giving me intimation of your visit, you ought to inform me before you leave me, when the term of your reign over my destiny is closed."

"Agreed," said the goddess of Prosperity, and remained within the sage.

The holy hermit being thus assured that the reign of Prosperity had commenced in him, proceeded to test the truth of the statement of the goddess. He at once went to the town near which he lived, and, advancing to the assembly in which the king was sitting with his ministers and other officers of state, lifted up his right leg and kicked the monarch on the head.

"Cut down that impertinent wretch," said many voices, but at the same moment from under the fallen crown a venomous serpent with its hood spread was discovered. It was Lakshmi herself, for she had appeared there in that form to save the sage. And as soon as this great wonder was discovered, every one in the hall exclaimed, "This is a great sage who knows the secret of the Three Ages *(Trikalajna)*, and perceiving that a serpent was lying concealed in the king's crown he kicked it down."

The king, too, was extremely delighted at this saving of his life, and at once gave the sage the post of prime minister with full powers; while our hero, on his part, owing to Lakshmi continuing her reign in him, discharged his duties most satisfactorily. After two years the sage again wished to know whether Lakshmi still continued in him, and to test her work, notwithstanding her promise that she would inform him before she left him. So, on one occasion at midnight he entered the king's *harem*. As he was prime minister, the guards, though in their proper places, did not dare to prevent him, and without any hindrance he went into the chamber where the monarch was sleeping with his queen. He laid hold of both of them and proceeded to drag them, while yet asleep, out of their room. Of course they awoke and were highly annoyed at this impertinence; but were unable to extricate themselves from his grasp. However, what was the wonder when the roof of the chamber in which they had been sleeping suddenly fell in. Every one praised once more the sage minister, as one who knew the secret of the Three Ages. After this occurrence the king reposed the greatest confidence in his minister, and so did every one in the State.

A year after this second test of the presence of Lakshmi in him the minister started with the king on a hunting expedition. The party was very large and the chase occupied a long time. Towards the end of the chase a stag suddenly appeared to the king and his favourite minister and drew them away from the party. Long did the king and minister pursue it, but found themselves unable to overtake it. Looking back they found themselves separated from their party and alone in the thick jungle. The lord of the day was just over their heads, and darting his rays fiercely. The king was utterly worn out, and proposed to the minister that it would be better for both of them to give up their quarry to rest a while before they returned to their followers; and the minister agreed to his master's wishes. So they both got down from their steeds, and leaving the animals free to find grass and water, sat down under the shade of a big banyan tree. Close by, there was a clear rivulet at which they quenched their thirst, and the king then prepared to go to sleep, asking the minister to sit with his legs folded, so that he might place his head on his right thigh and sleep comfortably. While the king was thus snoring away the day at ease, a great *garuda*, the king of birds, perched upon a bough of the tree exactly over the king's head and fell to preying upon a venomous serpent which it had brought from a great ant-hill. A drop of poison from the serpent dropped on the king's throat, and our hero the minister perceived it. Thinking that the poison might cause the king's death if it found its way inside the body through the pores of the skin, he took out a small knife which he had with him to gently remove the fatal drop. Just at this moment the goddess

Lakshmi, true to her promise, stood before him and asked his permission to go. He permitted her to do so and placed the knife on the king's throat. The king suddenly awoke and finding the minister with a knife at his throat upbraided him with treachery.

"If I had thoughts of killing you, my lord, I could have done it long ago. Look at the king of birds up above you, and also look at the serpent he is feasting upon. A drop of poison fell from the mouth of that deadly reptile on your Majesty's throat and for trying to remove it, I am abused. But there is no use in my remaining any longer with you." Thus spoke the minister and explained to the king how up to that moment Lakshmi had reigned in him. Continued he, "As the goddess Lakshmi remained in me up till now even my impertinent acts have met with your Majesty's approval. When I kicked at your lordship's crown and when I dragged your Majesty and your queen out of your bedchamber, Lakshmi it was that saved me by taking the shape of a serpent from under your crown, and by pulling down the roof of the room. Now that she has abandoned me but a moment ago even a good act has been misunderstood."

He then requested the king to allow him to continue in the forest to perform penance. But the king, not to be out-done in liberality, gave him again the minister's place. Our hero, however, fearing that after Lakshmi had left him it would be unwise to accept any appointment, preferred to remain in the woods.

The moral drawn by natives of South India from this story is that only as long as the Goddess of Prosperity reigns in us we can expect to be in good circumstances.

XXVIII

IT IS FOR THE BEST

In a certain country there lived a king who had a peculiar minister, and whatever the king consulted him about he always replied, "It is for the best." In a word, this minister was what would now be called an optimist.

One day the king lost one of his fingers in handling a sharp instrument, and, sending for the minister, he showed him his hand and said, sorrowfully, "See what a calamity has happened to me; I have lost one of my fingers."

The minister coolly replied, "It is for the best."

Greatly was the monarch enraged. "Vile wretch! Do you dare to say that the loss of a finger is for the best? You shall see the result of your stupid motto. You shall live in prison for scores of years," said the king. But again the minister merely replied, "It is for the best."

"What impertinence!" said the king, and sent the minister off to jail; and so our hero had to undergo imprisonment.

The day after this affair the king went to the forest to hunt, to which amusement he was in the habit of taking the minister along with him. But as he had imprisoned him he had to go all alone, and, after a long and tiring hunt, he rested under a tree for a short sleep. Before long he heard the roar of a lion and considered himself as good as dead, for

the lord of the beasts had seen the lord of men and had marked him down for his prey. The king went off into a dead faint. Now, it is a belief among the Hindus, that lions do not eat a man who is deformed or who sleeps. And so when the lion examined the fainting king and came to the mutilated hand he went away, spurning the monarch as useless for his prey as long as a finger was wanting.

When the king awoke, he thought within himself: "The words of my good minister have proved to be true when I showed him my deformed hand yesterday and he said, 'It is for the best ;' but I, in the love of my own self, took his words in a wrong sense and imprisoned him. Now, had it not been for my lost finger I would have fallen a prey to the lion. So my loss has worked for my good. But what good can possibly result from the imprisonment of my minister? He said it was for the best, and I shall ascertain from his own mouth what he meant."

So thinking the king returned, and at once ordered the minister to be released and to be brought before him. He came and stood before his lord accordingly, and the king explained to him all about the lion and how his words had proved to be true so far. "But how can my sending you to jail be for the best ?" said the king.

Replied the minister, " My most noble lord! Had it not been for my imprisonment in the jail I would have accompanied you to the forest and fallen a prey to the lion. After rejecting you for being deformed he would have taken me away for his feast. So I should have died.

Therefore even my having lived in the jail for a day was for the best."

The King was extremely pleased with the reply and received his minister into still greater confidence.

XXIX

THE JESSAMINE KING

In a certain country there lived a petty king called the Jessamine King (*Mallikairajan*), because when he laughed the country, for ten *kos* round, became fragrant with the scent of jessamines, provided his laughter was not forced but came naturally to him. His fame soon spread throughout the world, and many came to see him, and to wait for a chance of enjoying the scent he gave out. The Emperor, however, to whom the Jessamine King paid his tribute, sent for him in the pride of his superiority, and in obedience to the mandate, the Jessamine King went to his master, who tried in several ways to make him laugh, but in vain. After trying all he could the Emperor grew hopeless of success, and thinking that his vassal was impertinent, sent him to prison. So the poor Jessamine King for no fault of his own, was imprisoned.

Now just opposite the prison there lived a deformed cripple with whom the Emperor's wife had an unlawful intimacy. She was in the habit of going to him at the tenth *ghatika* of every night with pudding and sweetmeats, and remaining with him the whole night. Several people knew of this, and the Jessamine King was informed of it by the jailor, but he never seemed to take any notice of it.

One night the emperor's wife came rather later than usual, at which the cripple became highly enraged, and kicked and

struck her with his deformed legs and hands. She bore it patiently and without a murmur, and gave him the sweetmeats and other things as before. After eating his fill, the cripple thought within himself:—"What have I been doing to-day? I have severely punished a woman who is my protectress. Notwithstanding my intimacy with her, she is a woman of high rank. Perhaps she will discontinue her visits to me."

Thinking thus he spoke to her:—"My dear! you must excuse my kicks! Were they very severe?"

"No, my love!" said she. "I am as happy after them as one who has travelled over the fourteen worlds."

Now below the verandah in which this conversation was held, there was wandering about a washerman, who had lost an ass some days before. He had searched everywhere, but was not able to find it. After spending the earlier part of the night in looking for it, he rested himself under the verandah for a short time, and there he heard a woman saying that she was as happy as one who had travelled over the fourteen worlds, and he mistook her for a great traveller.

"Surely she must have met my ass somewhere or other," thought he, and getting up at once, he fell at her feet with tears in his eyes, saying "Mother! have you seen my lost ass?"

The Jessamine King had been watching all this, and as soon as the washerman fell at the wicked Empress's feet saying "Mother, have you seen my lost ass?" he could not contain his laughter. He laughed till his sides were like to

split, and lo! all around the sweet Jessamine scent began to play.

The servants of the Emperor, who were ordered by his Majesty to rouse him at the first sign of the jessamine scent at whatever time it might appear, now aroused him from his sleep. The emperor got up and thought to himself, "I tried my best to make my vassal laugh, and used all the means I could, but I failed altogether. What can be the reason for his laughter at this hour of the night? I will send for him." As soon as the Jessamine King was sent for, he made his appearance in due obedience to the Emperor's mandate, and did his best to conceal the reason of his laughter from him. But finding at last that his life was at stake he told the truth. So the end of it all was that the Emperor sent his wife and the cripple to the gallows, and the Jessamine King to his own country.

XXX

THE ARCH-IMPOSTOR

In a certain country there lived a Brahman who had seven sons. One moonlight night he called them all to his side and questioned them as to what they would most like to do at that moment. The first said that he would like to water his fields; the second, that he would go out on a journey; the third, that he would plough his lands, and so on. But the seventh and the last said that he would spend that fine moonlight night in a beautiful house with lovely girls by his side. The father was pleased with the simple replies of the first six boys; but when the last—who was the youngest—expressed so evil a desire, in such a presence, and in such a way, his rage knew no bounds. "Quit my house at once," said the father, and away ran the seventh son.

He left his country and his house that very night, as he was ashamed to live under his father's roof any longer, and went to the wood hard by. In the midst of this wood there dwelt an old woman who used to sell muffins and puddings to shepherds and boy neatherds who frequented the wood in the course of their employment. This had been her source of livelihood for several years, and she had in this way amassed considerable wealth in the shape of gold coins which she kept locked up in a small box. Now the seventh son, on his banishment from home, went to her and said:—

"Madam, I am a poor helpless orphan, will you kindly take me into your service? I shall be a great help to you in your old age."

So the old woman, pitying the poverty of the boy, and thinking he could help her, took him into her service, and promised to feed him and bring him up as her own son.

"What is your name?" asked the grandam.

"My name," replied he, "is Last Year *(Ponavarusham)*."

No doubt it was a queer name, but the old woman did not suspect anything, and thought within herself that such a designation was possible.

Full six years the boy lived with her, and behaved in such a way that she came to regard him almost as her son. She was delighted that God had sent her in her old age such a helper.

One night, just before going to supper, this boy, who had now grown to be a man, threw away all the water in the house and then sat down to his food. Consequently, when his meals was over, there was no water in the house, to wash his hands with; so the old woman went out to fetch water from a well that was at a little distance. Our hero, who will be henceforth called the Arch-Impostor, resolved to take the opportunity thus given to walk away with all the old woman's savings. He did not wait to wash his hands, but ran off at once with her box of money. Going to a little distance in the wood, he broke it open, emptied the contents into his cloth, and went onwards at random. He walked on for two days and nights, and on the third morning was on the point of emerging from the forest.

Just after he had run away the old woman returned with water from the well and found the boy absent. The thought

rushed into her mind at once that she might have been deceived and on quickly searching, she missed her box. Running to the village near her house she raised a loud cry, saying, "Last Year robbed my box, Last Year robbed my box," meaning of course that the person named "Last Year" had taken away her box. But as the words she used—*ponavarusham en pettiyai tirudikkondu ponan*—also mean, "Last Year (some one) robbed my box," the people only thought she had gone mad, and sent her away. However often she might explain that "Last Year" was the name of a man, they would not listen to her. Thus was the poor woman deceived.

Meanwhile, our hero, whom we left on the point of emerging from the forest with his bundle of gold coins on his back, was attacked by a bear. He had covered his body and the bundle as well with his upper cloth so as not to arouse suspicion. The bear placed one of its front paws on his shoulder where his bundle was, and our hero, to prevent the animal from doing any harm to him, took a firm hold of the other front paw which the beast had also raised, and ran round and round with it. Meanwhile the paw on his shoulder had made a hole in the bundle of coins, so that every now and then a gold coin dropped out. While this was going on a rich Muhammadan merchant, having a load of money with him, happened to ride by. Seeing a traveller attacked by a bear, he at once went to the rescue. Whereupon the Arch-Impostor, ever ready to turn everything to his own advantage, addressed him thus:—

"Friend, calmly pursue your course. Do not disturb yourself. This is a bear on which I pronounced an incantation, whereby it drops a gold coin every time that I go

round with it. I am testing it now, and have chosen this place to avoid the curiosity of other people. So, do not disturb me."

The Muhammadan, deceived by the composure with which the impostor spoke, and never suspecting that the coins were dropping from his bundle, replied:—"Friend, you appear to be a Brahman from your face; and it is not very proper for a Brahman to keep a bear in his house. Give it to me, and instruct me in the incantation. Take in return all the money I have on my horse, and the horse too if you like."

This was exactly what the impostor thought the Muhammadan would say. "My idea is working well," thought he within himself, and proceeded to become very reluctant to part with his bear. He also so managed that more coins began to drop, and the more the coins dropped the more the Muhammadan's mind was fixed with an ambition to become the master of the miraculous bear. He begged hard of the Brahman, and the latter, as if unwilling to part with a brute which a few moments before he feared would take his life, at last told the Muhammadan to tie its hind legs together with a cord, and then its front legs. In this way the brute was safely caught. The Brahman then pronounced a meaningless incantation over it, and told the Muhammadan to repeat it unceasingly for a month before trying its efficacy. He then picked up every gold coin he had dropped, and took leave of his Muslim friend. Telling him that his house was in the New Street of Madura, he went away with the horse and all the money on it. The Muhammadan merchant, fully believing that after a month's repetition the incantation would have the effect he saw,

spent nearly all his days engaged in repeating it, and in taking care of the bear.

The Arch-Impostor after thus duping the poor Muslim, pursued his journey, and reached a village about evening. It was a very inhospitable village, and after searching here and there for a place to sleep in, he at last came to the house occupied by the courtezans. He chose the best house, took his bedding into the outer verandah, and lay down with his bundles beneath his head and his horse tied to a tree in front of the house. As he had a large amount of money to guard, sleep did not come to his eyes; he could merely pretend to be sleeping. At about dawn his horse evacuated, and the impostor pushed two gold coins into each piece of the horse-dung. He then returned to his bed and pretended to sleep as before. The sweeper of the house soon after came out to do her daily duty, and after sweeping the outer verandah went up to the horse to remove the horse-dung. But the Arch-Impostor at once arose and said :—"Do not touch the dung of that horse. It is all so much gold." After saying this he carefully collected it, and took out the gold coins. The sweeper was amazed. She ran in and informed the mistress of the house of what she saw. The courtezan came out, and to her astonishment she saw the impostor taking two gold coins out of each piece of the horse-dung. Quite amazed she asked what it all meant, and our hero replied :—

"Madam! This is a horse given to me by a *yogi* (sage) who instructed me in a *mantra* (incantation). I pronounced it over the horse for a month and ever since that period it has had the power of dropping gold coins with its ordure." The amazed and ambitious courtezan wanted to

get possession of the horse, and learn the *mantra*. And our hero with a good deal of pretended reluctance parted with his horse in return for all her property. He then taught her some gibberish, which he told her was an incantation. He also told her that she must repeat it for a month, before it would work.

Thus deceiving the woman of the wood, the Muhammadan merchant, and the courtezan, our hero went to Madura bought a good house in the New Street, true to his word to the Musalman (and this was the only truth which he ever uttered in his life), and there married the daughter of a rich Brahman, and lived happily and in comfort.

The old woman of the wood was almost mad after the loss of her hard-earned money. She traced the footprints of treacherous Last Year and followed them up, hoping to find him out some day or other. After a month's journey in the tracks she reached the place where the Muhammadan merchant was engaged in rearing the bear. He had long before the old woman's arrival finished the required number of incantations, and had gone round with the bear more than a thousand times without success. The old woman engaged him in conversation, and he related everything to her. This led to a mutual explanation of the manner in which they had been duped. The fiery Musalman flew into a rage and said:—"We must trace out the rogue and punish him."

The old woman agreed, and they both started for Madura. In their first day's journey they chanced to go to the village where the courtezan had been befooled, and where her story was well known. Every child there could

tell them how over a month ago a rogue had come there and had deceived her about a horse and an incantation and had walked away with all her property. The Musalman soon identified the horse, and so the courtezan joined the old lady and the Muslim, and they all three went to Madura.

They found their enemy in the New Street, and he, getting up with a cheerful smile, welcomed them all, and after enquiring of their welfare asked them whether they had found the incantations useful. The old woman he consoled with an explanation of his sudden departure. He then requested them all to bathe and take their food, and himself showed the way to the river. Returning before the others, he asked his wife to prepare the ground for his worship of the household God, and also asked her to keep a pestle ready for him. He then asked her to bring the meal, pudding, etc., to be offered to the god, and to dress herself up as an old woman. He also told her that he would lightly beat her with the pestle, and throw her into the house, after which she was to suddenly appear again in the garb of a young woman, which, of course, was her natural attire. All these instructions were issued before his three friends returned from the river, and though Musalmans and courtezans are never allowed to enter the inner parts of a Brahman's house, he pretended to show special consideration to them, and asked them to take their seats at a respectful distance, so as to observe what passed inside. The impostor then proceeded with the worship of the god on a grand scale. He pronounced several incantations, and when the worship was drawing to a close, an old woman, *i.e.*, his wife in that

attire, brought the offerings. He caught hold of her by her hair, and with his other hand felt for the pestle. The Musalman and the others at once flew to the rescue of the old woman, but with a smile of perfect composure the impostor said :—

"My friends, do not think I want to kill her. If I beat her with this pestle and throw her into the house, she will return as a young girl. I have made many such old women young by the administration of this pestle." Thus saying he proceeded to beat the old woman and threw her into the house. And the impostor's wife, as well up in tricks as her husband, though she had lived with him for less than a month, came out as a young girl. The three old friends who came to be even with the old rogue wondered at what they saw.

They consulted among themselves :—" The fellow is really here ; so, we can wreak our vengeance upon him whenever we choose. For the present let us obtain his pestle and depart as friends."

The worship was soon over, and our hero proceeded to look to the convenience of his visitors. He asked them to have some food, and superintended their meals himself. They all concealed their anger for the nonce in the hope of getting hold of the pestle, which he gladly allowed them to take away for a week. The three thus duped again went away to their respective houses with the pestle, and made arrangements as to the use of it.

The courtezan knew many old women in her street whom she wished to convert into young ones. So she wanted it first, and the old lady of the wood made up her

mind to stay with her to witness the experiment, while the Muhammadan merchant agreed to take the pestle after a week from the courtezan. Thus it was her fortune to try it first. Alas! many a woman she killed with it in the fond hope that one at least would be transformed to a young woman. No transformation came after all; only death was the result. So before even the week was up the lady sent the pestle to the Muslim duly informing him how unsuccessful she found it to be. But he blamed her not being a good hand at thrashing, and had soon himself pounded to death several old women among his relatives. Being then again deceived he went to the courtezan, and said to her: "My friend, see how we have been duped a second time. How many of our dear relatives we have killed. Let us go to that man again, and kill him before he again contrives to deceive us."

"Agreed," said she, and they started off again with the old lady of the wood. After a long journey, they reached the impostor's house, and found him absent. On enquiry they came to know that he had gone to the river to bathe. The old lady remained in his house, and the other two went after him. They carried a bag with them and strong ropes also, and finding him bathing all alone, they surprised him, and tying up his hands and legs put him in the bag, and took him to a mountain near to burn him alive as a full revenge for all his deception. Climbing to the very top of it they placed the bundle down and went to the jungle near to collect fuel for the fire. Our hero was now in an awkward plight, but he kept saying to himself:—"I don't want to marry that girl, I don't want to marry that girl."

Now, while the Musalman and the courtzean were away in the jungle collecting fuel, a neatherd who was grazing a herd of cows a little below was attracted by the voice that kept on saying:—"I don't want to marry that girl." Coming up to our hero he said:—"What is the meaning of what you say? Why are you tied up thus in a bundle?"

Hope at once dawned in the impostor's breast, and he hastily replied:—"Friend, whoever you may be, you are my protector. Release me at once from the bag. My uncle and aunt want to marry me to a girl whom I do not like. Against my will they carried me up here to marry me to her. Fortunately they have just gone to some spring near to quench their thirst." The stupid neatherd, little suspecting that it was odd that a man should be married on the top of a mountain, promised to open the bag and let him out on condition he would allow him to go into the bag himself, and thus be placed in his happy position.

"Agreed," said the impostor, and so the bag was quickly opened, the ropes round his legs and hands untied, and the neatherd packed up in his place. Our hero then went to the place where the herd of cows was grazing, and returned home with them. Here he found the old lady of the wood waiting and welcomed her heartily, telling her that all his wealth was hers, and promising to regard her as his own mother, as she had been one to him for six years.

Meanwhile the Musalman and the courtezan had lighted a large fire in the jungle and went for the bag. The neatherd inside kept quite silent for fear, if he spoke,

that the change that had taken place would become known. But, instead of being married to a young girl, he was soon thrown into the fire.

"Thus have we killed our impostor, "said the friends:— "Now let us go to his house and plunder it." So they return exulting to the New Street of Madura where our hero was sitting outside his house chewing betel, and expecting them every moment. The thousand and one cows he had obtained were still standing outside. When they both saw him safely seated outside his own house and smiling welcome to them, their wonder knew no bounds. "We threw you an hour ago in the fire," said they, "and how are you sitting here safe?"

"Yes, my friends," replied he, "as soon as you threw me into the fire, I went to the *Kailasa*, the world of felicity, and met my father and grandfather. They told me that my time to live in the world was not over and sent me back with these kine."

"Then the same presents will be given to us, too, if we go to that world of heavenly bliss?" said they.

"Undoubtedly," replied the impostor; and then with their consent he took them to the mountain and threw them into the fire never more to revive and return with presents.

Returning home and relieved for ever from his troublesome friends the Arch-Impostor lived happily, protecting the old woman of the wood, who had protected him in his younger days.

Though the hero of this tale has the worst of characters still the relaters of this story excuse him for his presence of mind in all his hardships, and draw a moral from it that ambition is bad. The Musalman and the courtezan, even though they repeatedly found out their friend, were always fired with ambition, and at last lost their lives through it.

XXXI

THE FOUR GOOD MAXIMS

First Variant

In a certain village there lived a poor merchant of the Chetti caste. He had an only son, to whom, on his death-bed, he handed a palm-leaf as his only property. The following four maxims were inscribed on it:—

(1) "Travel not without a living assistant.

(2) "Sleep not in an inn.

(3) "Neglect not what four or five people say.

(4) "Be not always open towards your wife."

Receiving the leaf containing the four maxims, the old Chetti's son, who had the greatest regard for his father, promised him, in his last moments, that he would observe each and every one of those maxims to its last letter. Then the old man died, and the funeral rites were duly performed over him.

After the death of the old Chetti, the difficulties of his son increased, for he had nothing to live upon. So he resolved to travel to some distant place, and there to earn his livelihood. While he was thinking over this, Somusetti,—for that was the youth's name,—bethought him of his father's first maxim,—not to travel without a living assistant. But where was he to go for an assistant in his poverty-stricken condition? As he was thinking and worrying over this, a crab

happened to crawl slowly past him, and placing a literal interpretation on his father's words, he took hold of the crab, and put it in an earthen pan full of water and covering the mouth with a cocoanut-shell started on his journey, with his mind at ease; for had he not now a living assistant for his journey?

In this way Somusetti travelled for about a day, till only one watch remained before the lord of day should sink out of sight. He was extremely tired, and seeing a fine shady banyan tree, he laid himself down overcome by exhaustion, under the cool shade to sleep and give rest to his wearied limbs. The pan, with the crab in it, he kept by his side.

Half-an-hour or so after Somusetti had gone to sleep a crow, which had its nest on the top of the banyan tree, began to caw. Now this was a very dangerous crow, for as soon as it cawed, a serpent—the incarnation of Death itself—used to come out of an ant-hole near the tree and drink up the life of any sleeper lying in its shadow. Not one sleeper till that day had ever survived his sleep, and so the tree was much dreaded. However, on this occasion, the crab came out of its pan and pinched Somusetti's hand, and he suddenly awoke in consequence. Getting up, he saw the huge black serpent coming towards him, and away he ran with all the speed that he could command.

Meeting some neatherd boys not far off, he related to them his narrow escape, and they, with one voice, exclaimed that he was a most fortunate man. Said they :—" Friend, many a man has slept under that tree, but not one except yourself, ever rose up alive. It is the most dreaded tree

in the neighbourhood, and is known by the name of the crow's cawing tree. No one from our villages near ever approaches that tree, but only weary travellers, whom we cannot warn or persuade, for we all try to do so when we can; and whenever they resort to it they always die. So saying the boys went about their duties, and Somusetti too thanking his stars and wondering at the wisdom of his father's first maxim through which alone he had been saved, pursued his course and before twilight reached a village.

He went down the street crying, "Who will feed this beggar with a handful of rice?" Half-a-dozen of the villagers gave him each a handful or two of cooked rice, which served our hero for his simple supper. He then went begging for a lodging wherein to sleep. But though a few would feed him, not a single soul in the whole village would permit him to sleep in his house. Not that the poor villagers were wanting in hospitality, for such kindness has always been proverbial among the rural population of India, specially among Hindus. But unfortunately for Somusetti, this particular village was subject to attacks by robbers; and every now and then some crafty robber had visited it as a beggar or a traveller and requested the villagers for a place to sleep in. Many a time had their hospitality been requited by plunder, for the pretended traveller would open the door of his host to his comrades, and thus help them to do their terrible work. The misery that the villagers had on several occasions experienced, had obliged them, without making any distinction between good and bad, never to allow anyone to sleep in their houses. They all suggested that Somusetti

should go to the village-inn to sleep. But our hero, remembering his father's second maxim,—not to sleep in an inn,—preferred the open plain adjoining the village. Thither he went, and spreading a couple of rags on the ground, prepared himself for sleep, thinking over his father's words which had saved his life the preceding night, and admiring his sagacity.

The day's adventures were so impressed upon his mind that, though he was very weary, he did not for a long time fall asleep. At last nature overcame him and he closed his eyelids, but only for a short repose. For as soon as he had stretched his limbs in sleep, he dreamt that a serpent was pursuing him and was almost at the point of biting him. This dream, which was nothing but a recollection of his previous adventure, was not yet finished, when he imagined that several persons were beating him. This was no dream, but a stern reality; for on opening his eyes, he discovered that he was surrounded by a gang of robbers, each one of whom was giving him a blow, saying:—"Give me what you have in your hand." Unable to bear the severe beating to which he was being subjected he collected the rags spread on the ground, and in a pitiable tone said:—"These are all I have in this world; take them and spare my life." Some of the robbers, a little better-hearted than the others, said that he was a pauper, and that it would be as well for them to leave him alone. Others however gave him additional blows for not having anything of any use with him, and walked off with his rags.

All soon left him and proceeded towards the village. Somusetti sat up stupefied, not knowing what to do. He

had avoided the village-inn as he had chosen the most harmless spot he could find, and yet thieves had plundered him of his rags! The danger of the day and horror of the night not yet over, passed before his mind, and the more he thought the more stupefied he became. At last, after thinking and thinking for some two or three hours, he rose up from that place, resolving to go to the village-inn, notwithstanding his father's warning words, and spend the remainder of the night there. However, he had not proceeded far when he saw the robbers again. He kept out of their way, and after they had passed, proceeded to the village, and to the inn, against entering which his father had so wisely warned him. And the spectacle that met his eyes there! He found the whole village assembled outside the inn, for the robbers had chosen that spot for their havoc that night, and had murdered every soul sleeping in it! Not a soul that had slept there had escaped the cruel hands of the bloodthirsty ruffians, who had come there specially that night because they had heard from one of their spies that a rich traveller was then sojourning there. Somusetti, who a moment before had been calling himself a fool for not having gone into the public inn for his night's repose, now shed tears of joy to the memory of his father.

By this time it was dawn, and the villagers requested Somusetti to oblige them by burying the murdered persons. It is loathsome work to bury the unclaimed dead, and our hero would have avoided the task, but the old Chetti's third maxim,—"Neglect not what four or five people say" —rushed into his mind, and, true to his promise, he willingly consented to perform the disagreeable task.

In return, the villagers promised to pay him at the rate of five *fanams* for every dead body interred and gave him the privilege of taking for his own use any property that he might find on the dead. Our hero thus gained a double advantage; he was obeying his father's third maxim, and he was profiting himself materially by it. His reward was indeed a double one, for though the robbers had plundered all the people in the inn before putting them to death, still a great deal remained on the bodies. One of them, indeed, who had been a Chetti, had in his waist-cloth nine rubies tied up in a rag, and these our hero secretly removed and secured without arousing any suspicions. The great wealth he thus acquired in the remuneration for his duty, made him at once very rich, in addition to the possession of the nine rubies. He thought that he had now enough to live upon, and returned to his own village. Near it there was an old temple of Kali, in ruins, and to this our hero resorted in the dead of night, and underneath the idol itself buried his nine rubies and a great part of his other treasure. What remained with him was enough for him to lead a respectable life. He took to wife a girl of respectable family, and lived with her for a while in happiness and comfort.

Unlike the usual run of Chettis, who are proverbial for their stinginess, our hero was known in his village for his liberality. And whenever all his available cash was exhausted, he would ask his wife for a little rice for a meal or two, as he was going to a village near, to try and make some more money. Now our hero had never informed his wife where he had buried his treasure, for his father's fourth and last maxim was, "Be not always open with your

wife." And Somusetti had benefited so much by the strict observation of the first three maxims, that he had every reason to give more than usual weight to the last one. So he always kept his treasure underneath the image of Kali a dead secret; but he now and then went to it, in the dead of night, when his cash was exhausted, pretending to be absent from the village, and always returned with enough for his expenses. This he did for a long time, and little by little he bought land, extended his house, and made jewels for his wife. She was a very simple and good-natured woman, but even she began to suspect that her husband must be the master of some miraculous power, to be growing rich in this way. She often asked him how he managed, every time he left the village, to return with so much money. He kept the truth from her for a long time, but she went on worrying him repeatedly. Even iron by constant hammering gives way, and the heart of a man, especially under feminine charms, has much less chance. So, notwithstanding his strict resolution to observe his father's words to their last letter, our hero at last told the whole truth to his wife, warning her at the same time to keep it a dead secret, and never to open her lips to anyone about it. He told her that he had brought with him a great quantity of money and nine rubies, that all the money had been spent, that he had sold one of the rubies for nine *karors* of *mohars*, on which money he was still living, and that when that was gone, he had still eight more rubies, each of which was worth the same enormous sum. How great was his wife's joy when she heard this news from her husband! Her whole face beamed over with it, and she swore to keep the secret. Thus did our hero, for once in his life, not-

withstanding his strict resolution to observe his father's maxims, deviate from the last of them, and we shall now see the consequences.

The very next day the mistress of the neighbouring house, paying her usual visit to our hero's wife, observed unusual brightness in her face, and on repeatedly enquiring the cause of it learnt all the secret of Somusetti's wealth. In fact Somusetti's wife told all about the rubies, the place where they lay buried, and everything else, to her friend, repeatedly asking her to keep the secret, as of course she swore over and over again to do. The conversation was very engrossing. The more attentively the neighbour listened, the more excited Somusetti's wife became and went over and over the same facts. Having thus learnt the whole affair, the neighbour took her leave, and naturally the first thing she did was to communicate it to her husband, who in his ambition and covetousness at the increasing prosperity of Somusetti, robbed him of the remaining eight rubies that very night.

A day or two passed without our hero knowing of the heavy loss that had befallen him, but, on the third day after the communication of the secret to his wife, Somusetti began to be a little uneasy in mind at having disclosed it in spite of his father's injunctions, and resolved to go that very night to the temple of Kali to examine his treasure. Accordingly he went, without informing his wife about it, and from that moment his happiness left him. When he missed his rubies, he stood like a stone for a while and then went mad.

Plucking wild flowers, making them into wreaths, and adorning his body with them, he began to wander from village to village and from city to city, crying "Give me back my eight rubies," and saying nothing else, no matter what people might say to him. His wife, who knew well enough why the change had come over her husband, cursed herself for her carelessness, and not knowing what else to do, followed her husband, secretly watching him and feeding him. For very shame, she never gave out the reason of her husband's madness, nor mentioned her relationship to him; but as her inward conscience chided her for being the cause of all his grief, she, like a good wife, determined to share his miseries. In this way more than two years passed. And Somusetti, among other peculiarities, would never taste a morsel of rice even when hungry. If rice was placed before him by some one through the kindness of his wife, he would fling it away, muttering, "Give me my eight rubies."

Thus wandering over several countries, our mad hero at last reached a great city, the king of which was famous throughout the country for his liberality to beggars. Never would he taste a handful of rice without feeding them first, and for their special entertainment he had built a large dining-shed, and used to superintend their meals in person. The day on which Somusetti joined the beggars of the city at their dinner, the king, as usual, came to watch the feeding. Every beggar was soon engaged at his meal, except our hero, who was almost famished with hunger. A man in his state would naturally go straight for his dish. But Somusetti cared for nothing that was placed before him, but kept muttering " Give me back my

eight rubies,"sometimes to the wall, sometimes to the leaf-plate in front of him, sometimes to the servants. The king's attention was drawn to this unfortunate beggar, who never even tasted the rice, famished though he was, but kept on talking about rubies instead. He thought that there must be some connection between rubies and his madness, and as he had bought a ruby the previous day from a merchant, he sent for it, in the hope that the beggar might take a little food on seeing it. The ruby was brought and placed before our mad hero, who seized it and said :—"One has come; bring back the other seven." This he kept on saying incessantly. The king now concluded that there was some special reason for his madness and ordered his servants to watch him carefully, and do their utmost to feed him. He also secretly issued orders to have the merchant who had sold him the ruby the previous day brought to him. Now this man, it must be explained, was no other than the neighbour of Somusetti who had stolen the rubies. To avoid all suspicion he had travelled to this distant country to sell his ill-gotten gains, but fearing that a sudden sale of all the rubies might awaken suspicion, he had begun, on the previous day, by selling one only to the king, promising to bring another the next evening. In the evening, according to his promise, he brought the second ruby. The king gladly bought it, and, promising to double the price for a third, demanded it on the third evening. Thus the rubies began to come to him one after another, and every evening, after a purchase, the king returned with it secretly to Somusetti, whose madness began to decrease by degrees on the recovery of his lost rubies one by one. The king went on playing the trick of promising double and

treble the price, till the last and eighth ruby was bought, and then he at once issued orders to have the merchant arrested and imprisoned till the history of the rubies was known. On the production of the eighth ruby Somusetti was entirely cured of his madness, and falling at the feet of the king related the whole story of the four maxims, how he had disobeyed the last of them, and what calamities had come upon him in consequence. The king was highly pleased, and after punishing the pretended merchant with death, he restored the rubies to their rightful owner, Somusetti. And our hero, not to be outdone for his liberality, presented half to the king who had taken so much pains in bringing him back to his senses, and returned with the other four to his own country.

As soon as he was restored to his original state, he learnt about his wife, how she had guarded and followed him all along throughout his miseries; and forgetting that she was the cause of all of them, he pardoned her faults and lived happily with her. And the good woman too, seeing that all these miseries had resulted from the wealth not being placed in the house, exercised a most scrupulous care over her husband's property, especially remembering the sufferings that both had undergone.

XXXII

THE FOUR GOOD MAXIMS

Second Variant

In a certain country there lived a famous but poor soothsayer, who had an only son whom he loved very much. Suddenly he fell ill, and thinking that his end was approaching, called his son to his bedside, and, taking out an inscribed palm-leaf from underneath his pillow, thus addressed him :—"My son, do not be vexed with me that I bequeath to you no property. If you take this palm-leaf to some king or other, he will amply reward you." Thus saying the poor old soothsayer died, and his son, not troubling much about his father's words at the time, put the palm-leaf in the thatch and attended to the last rites of his departed parent.

After some days had passed, wishing to test his father's statement, he proceeded with the manuscript to a King and, explaining its history, asked for a reward, and the King, who was a very prudent man, promised payment in due time. His object, of course, was to test the truth of the four maxims he found in the palm-leaf, before paying for it. They were :—

(1) Do not travel without money or jewels in hand to help you in necessity.

(2) Do not send your wife for a long while to her parents.

(3) Do not seek your sister when you are in misery.

(4) Seek always your friend when you are in misery.

The King, in order to test these four maxims, called his minister to his side and, explaining his intention, made over his kingdom to his charge for a time. He then assumed the garb of a poor peasant; but hid in his loin's cloth a diamond ring of very great value to serve him in need, remembering the first maxim of the soothsayer.

Now, a long while before this affair he had sent his wife to her parent's house, and desired to follow her there and examine her conduct. To disguise himself, he placed a bundle of fire-wood on his head and appeared in this guise in the street of the town in which his wife lived. He had not far to walk before he discovered his wife engaged in playing dice with a neighbouring musician, in the verandah of whose house she was openly sitting. Wishing to examine further, the King in his disguise stood before the house and said, "Fire-wood to sell! Who will buy my fire-wood?" The musician was attracted by the voice, and demanded the price of the bundle. The King, whose object was to stand there for a time and see what passed, demanded a low price at which he knew his wares would not be rejected. The musician, thinking the price very cheap, ordered him to take it inside the house and throw it on the wood heap. The apparent wood-seller obeyed the order and returned to demand the price. "Wait a moment, you fool, you are a rude fellow that does not know when to speak; wait," said the master.

And our hero, glad at heart at the opportunity afforded him to test his wife, gladly consented, saying, "My master, why should you be so much enraged at a poor wood-seller who is ever ready to obey your orders. I will wait the whole day, if you order me to do so." So saying, he sat down below the verandah, looking as if he were waiting for the price of his wood.

In Hindu society the mere fact of a respectable woman sitting with a musician and playing dice with him would be enough to make a man suspect her character. The familiarity of her speech and other things that followed gave ample proofs of his wife's conduct to the disguised King. The day was almost approaching to its close, and yet the pair had not left off playing. At twilight the lady said she would be absent for only a few *ghatikas* and return to him during the night. When the wood-seller heard this, he praised his good fortune for the opportunity thus offered him of witnessing his wife's conduct. The musician, in the hurry of parting with his lady love, forgot all about the wood-seller, who remained complacently waiting outside.

Before the first watch of the night was over, the King's wife returned, and in passing into the house trod over her own husband sitting in the dark verandah! Said she, "Who are you, sir, sittting here in the dark?" "Your humble wood-seller whom the master of the house has not yet paid," replied he. She then chided the musician for not having already paid the man and sent him away. But he excused himself by saying that he had no change, and that he intended to give the poor fellow some food for the night and then send him away. "Do me that favour, my

lord; that is more than payment to me," cried our hero most piteously.

Food was hastily given him, and then the musician and the King's wife entered their sleeping apartment. Our hero, after eating a little, took his bed in the outer verandah, apparently to sleep, but really to keep himself awake and examine his wife's conduct still further. In this he was very successful, overhearing enough of the conversation that passed between the musician and the lady to give him a clear idea of the latter's character.

Next morning, when the King's wife was returning home, she had suspicions about the wood-seller, who was still asleep in the outer verandah. She had closely watched him the previous day, and his disguise was not easily to be seen through. But in the morning, when his limbs were fully stretched in the profound sleep that came upon him after his long wakefulness, she, notwithstanding the clever disguise assumed, strongly suspected him to be her husband. The King now suddenly awoke and, still pretending to be a wood-seller, said, "My good lady, the food that the master of the house gave me last night stretched me senseless in this verandah. May God give you long life. I go now." And so saying he made off.

His wife, half suspecting that he was her husband, but hoping that after all he was only a wood-seller closely resembling her husband, returned home hastily, and sent for two murderers, promising them a good reward if they would only fly after the person she described and murder him. They agreed, and she ascended with them

to the topmost story of her house and watched in the direction in which the pretended wood-seller had gone. It had not been very difficult for her to point him out, nor had it been in any way a matter of difficulty to the murderers to mark him down. Then she hastily sent them away, and these ruffians vanished like hawks after their game.

When the King had met his wife face to face in the morning he feared that, being a cunning woman unfaithful to her husband, she might have read through him, and so he fled out of the town as fast as he could. The ruffians, however, soon came to him and seizing him by the hair, said that they had been ordered to murder him. "What have I done to deserve this sort of treatment at your hands," demanded our hero. "Nothing to us, but something to a lady who has promised to reward us amply," replied they.

Seeing it was vain to argue with them, the King slyly dragged the ruffians into a conversation, and, after praising them, promised to reward them with a jewel worth the three worlds if they would only spare him. Money was their first object in life, and they did not care from whom they got it. And besides, what cause would the lady have to disbelieve them if they said that they had killed the man and demanded the reward of her too? In this way they would be doubly rewarded. Thus argued they, and demanded from the King what he had to give. Then our hero taking a diamond of unparalleled lustre and value from his loin cloth gave it to them, on condition that they let him escape. They agreed to do so, on condition on his part that he never came back to

that city. Our hero, who was always careful to turn every event to his own advantage, promised them a thousand times never more to go in that direction and took his leave.

He had thus examined his wife's character and in that way had tested the truth of the second maxim—Send not your wife long to her parents' house. He had also examined the truth of the first maxim—Not to travel without money or jewel on hand,—for it was the diamond that saved his head.

He had now to examine the truth of the other two maxims, and so he turned towards his sister's town. She had been married to a rich *zamindar* at about ten *kos* distance from the city he had just left. He had an easy road to walk, but not an easy mind, for his wife's conduct pierced his heart, and his only consolation was that he had no issue by her. It was about midday when he reached the city his sister lived in. The sun was still high in the heavens, and the previous night's wakefulness and the morning walk after escape from the ruffians brought upon our hero such thirst and hunger that he was almost fainting. He was, however, fortunate enough to reach the big tank at the entrance of the town and, getting into it hastily, drank half a dozen handfuls of water. Then he went on to the bank, and sitting below a shady banyan-tree, rested his exhausted limbs. A poor Brahman happened to pass by, and calling him to his side, our exhausted hero mentioned to him the name of his sister, which was well known throughout the ciiy, as she was a very wealthy lady. The disguised King then explained to the Brahman who he was, and requested him to inform

her of his arrival, so that she might send him some food as he was almost dying with hunger. The Brahman ran off all the harder when he heard that the person he had been talking to was a King, and duly communicated the news to the King's sister. She enquired of him whether her brother had come with all his royal paraphernalia.

"No," replied the messenger; "he is as it were a beggar, half famished now by hunger." She now thought that her brother, by some misfortune or other, had lost all his kingdom and wealth, and instead of being still the more hospitable to him in consequence of his adversity, she, in her pride of wealth, disdained all knowledge of her brother, in his beggar's condition. But she was at least kind enough to send him a plateful of cold rice several days old, not even fit for dogs to eat. The unfortunate King received this through the kind Brahman who, pitying his fate, brought better food cooked in his house to his royal guest. The King thanked him for his kindness, but said that his sister's food was more tasteful to him, and, after partaking two or three mouthfuls, requested the Brahman to preserve the plate with the cold rice in it for a few days in his house, telling him that he would have occasion to call for it.

He then left the Brahman and went to another city where he had a good friend. They had been playmates from their boyhood and had read in the same school and under the same teachers; and so to that friend our hero went. He was extremely poor, but for all that, on seeing the King approach his dwelling, he ran to him with a most welcome face, enquired the reason which had turned his royal friend into a beggar, and wept over

his troubles as if they had been his own. The King, whose object was to test the four maxims, invented a tale for the nonce that his kingdom had been taken away by an enemy, and that he was really a beggar. His friend shed tears in profusion and requested him to live in his house as if it were his own palace till better days should come. Though he was poor, he tried his best, as far as his means admitted, to give rich meals to his royal guest, and instructed his wife in the following manner:—"My dear, you must know that our guest is a royal personage who has seen better days. Although he is now a beggar, you must not on that account lessen your respect for him. All that we have in the house we must devote to feeding him. Though we may eat without *ghi* or curds, you must give these to him in abundance."

She, being an extremely well-behaved and virtuous woman, obeyed her husband's words to the letter, and our hero though he was living in a poor man's house, had every kind of hospitality shown to him. Language had no bounds to express his obligation to them. He tested his friend for more than a fortnight, and on no occasion did he see their care of him diminish.

The King was greatly delighted to see that all the four maxims of the soothsayer had proved true, and was now bent upon returning to his country and rewarding the person who had offered them on payment. So first he explained to his friend that he had come in that disguise to test him, and that he was still the lord of his kingdom. He then sent for his royal paraphernalia, and with all the usual pomp and circumstance made a royal march to the city where his sister dwelt. At a distance

of a few miles, he sent messengers, with badges and other outward signs of royalty, to announce to his sister that he was coming to her house for supper. She prepared a grand feast for him, and soon the King and his party arrived. The King's friend came, too, and almost all the noblemen of that city were gathered that night in the King's sister's house to join the royal party, and the party had all sat before their leafy plates for supper, the dishes were being served and everything was ready; when, just as each guest began to eat, the King demanded from his sister the cold rice she had given him in his apparent adversity. She hung her head for very shame, and then he explained to the whole assembly the history of the cold rice, and hastily took his leave, refusing to taste even a single mouthful in his sister's house.

He then proceeded to the town where his wife lived. There also his father-in-law and others made preparations for his visit. He called them all together, including his wife and the musician and explained before them all how he had discovered the illicit love of his wife. He then had his wife and her unlawful companion impaled, and returned to his country. He rewarded his minister for his good government during his absence and gave him for his assistant the friend who protected him in his misery. After taking upon himself the kingdom our hero gave a *jagir* for each maxim to the poor soothsayer's son who gave him the palm-leaf containing the four maxims.

XXXIII

THE SIX GOOD MAXIMS

In the ancient city of Mathurai, in Southern India, there lived a famous king, at whose court was a Pandit for whose sayings he had the greatest respect and the most implicit faith. Now the Pandit's son and the king's son were great friends. Their names were Nayanamanohara and Satyaparakrama. They were playmates from their earliest boyhood, studied under the same teachers, and from their first acquaintanceship became inseparable companions. The Pandit's learning and influence with the king had earned him a pretty large fortune, and he was moreover, a very prudent and cautious man. Being advanced in years he foresaw that he had not much longer to live, and though his son, Nayanamanohara, was a learned man he had not much confidence in him. His son was indeed a prodigal, given to the company of loose women, and he was sure that as soon as he died he would waste his property in no time if bequeathed to him. So calling his wife aside he spoke thus to her:—

"My dear old wife; something within me tells that I am to die before you, and so you will be left in sole charge of all our property. You must therefore exercise a careful watch over it, for otherwise I fear that our son will get rid of it before long. Now, should it ever happen that notwithstanding your watchfulness he should lose all I have to leave, and finds that he

has nothing to live upon, give him this scroll, telling him that it is worth six *lakhs* of *mohars*. But unless such an event happens never even mention its existence to him." Thus the old man advised his wife, and she agreed to abide by all that he said. After some months the old man was taken suddenly ill, and soon breathed his last.

Nayanamanohara was now the master of a large fortune, but his old mother was at first very careful and allowed to have very little to say to the management of it. However, little by little, after repeated cajoling, he won her over and got the management of the whole property into his own hands. This accomplished, he wasted all his wealth in no time, and before a full year had elapsed after the father's death, it was all gone.

One day he was sitting sullenly idle, when his old mother, who, in spite of all his faults, loved him very dearly, approached him and said :—" Why are you so moody today ? I have been repeatedly advising you against the company you keep, but in your headlong extravagance you never heeded the words of your poor old mother. You must now pay dearly for your folly. You have wasted all our property, and we have not even a mouthful left for our morning meal ! But foreseeing how you would behave, your old father left a scroll with me which he said was worth six *lakhs* of *mohars*. You can dispose of it now for whatever you like and with the money that you realise live in comfort for a while longer.

Thus spoke the old lady, and Nayanamanohara was delighted to hear that there was still some valuable property left to him. Being an educated man and having the greatest

regard for his father's attainments, he thought that if the old man had fixed six *lakhs* of *mohars* as the price of the scroll, it must be well worth that amount. So he asked for it; and when it was brought to him, he read in it the following six maxims:—

(1) A father should always check and never forgive.

(2) A mother should always forgive and never check.

(3) Do not send your wife long to her parents' house.

(4) When in reduced circumstances do not go to your sister's home.

(5) But when in reduced circumstances seek always your oldest friend.

(6) A country not examined in disguise will always be ruined.

When Nayanamanohara read these maxims, he shed many tears at the truth conveyed in the first two, which were so applicable in his own case. As long as the old man had lived he was always checking him, and throughout several years of an evil extravagant life he had not lost any of his property. But in the very first year after his death he had managed to throw away everything. He now saw clearly that it was his mother's repeated forgiveness of all his sinful expenditure that was the cause of his ruin. So finding that the first two maxims had turned out so true, he took it as an indication of the correctness of the four to follow, and therefore considered that the document was fully worth what his father esti-

mated; so he took it and cried its value in the streets, asking who would buy it. Many took him to be mad :—for who would be willing to part with six *lakhs* of *mohars* for an inscribed palm-leaf? So without any success, Nayanamanohara at length reached the street in which the palace was situated. Satyaparakrama, the prince of the city, was standing in the topmost storey of his house after his morning bath in scented sandal-oil, arranging his hair, when the words, "A scroll of six maxims to sell; each maxim is worth a *lakh* of *mohars*," fell on his years.

The prince turned his eyes in the direction from which the voice proceeded, and was astonished to see that it was his own boyhood's companion who was thus crying out. Calling to him by his name, the prince enquired after his welfare, as they had never met after their school-days. Then Satyaparakrama enquired, over and over again, whether the maxims were really written by the old Pandit, and on Nayanamanohara's assuring him as often that they were, and that his father had left them to him as property worth six *lakhs* of *mohars* the prince began to think to himself :—"Surely! If the old Pandit fixed the price at six *lakhs*, it must be worth that and more, and my friend, though he may be in reduced circumstances, won't receive any presents from me; so in buying this scroll I shall gain a double benefit: one to myself in buying the sayings of a holy man and testing the truth of them, and the other to my friend in giving him the six *lakhs* as their price."

Thus argued the prince and bought the scroll for the sum that was named. The Pandit's son returned home

with this fresh and larger fortune, and having now learnt the value of money, began to lead a chaste and simple life. His mother also took part in checking his expenses.

Now, three months before the prince had bought this scroll, he had sent his wife to her parent's house, to be present at a wedding that was coming off there. But one wedding had followed another, and she had been obliged to stay for all of them, and so had been absent a long while. Meanwhile a calamity befell our prince. His father, the old king, on examining his son's accounts, saw six *akhs* of *mohars* entered as an item of expenditure for the purchase of a scroll of palm-leaf containing six maxims. Now, he was a miser, and anger came over him. "Fly from my presence, you fool of a prince, who does not know the value of money, and never return to this kingdom without restoring the money thus ill-spent," roared the old man, and our hero, the prince, out of shame and disappointment, ran away from home. He, who had been from his birth in the enjoyment of the best of everything, was now a homeless fugitive. Unwilling to show his face to the world as a prince banished by his father for his extravagance, he assumed the disguise of a beggar.

Now his wife had jewels which were worth several *lakhs*, and as he was extremely attached to her, he sent her word secretly, informing her of his reduced condition, and asking her to replace the ill-spent money by the sale of a portion of her jewels so that he might return home happily. In reply he was told that her father had possession of all of them, and that he was unwilling to dispose of any of them. Thus disappointed, our hero went as a beggar

from village to village and city, till at last he reached the town where his sister was living.

His sister was married to a rich *Peshkar* who was a kind of general under the emperor of the Pandya country to whom Satyaparakrama's father, the king of Mathura, paid tribute, and to her house our hero went. He knocked at the door at about midnight, just as the master and mistress of the house were retiring to rest. "Who is it that knocks?" called out his brother-in-law. "Satyaparakrama," answered our hero from outside. "Begone thou ghost. Do not lie thus. Satyaparakrama would never have had any occasion to come here," replied his sister. But after repeated explanations from our hero outside, his sister at last, without the knowledge of her husband, who cared little whether the person outside was his brother-in-law| or not opened the door, and when she found that it was her own brother transformed into a beggar, driven from his home on account of his recklessness in spending his father's money, she had no regard for him, but went inside, telling the servants to get the beggar outside some stale gruel. She was ahamed to acknowledge a brother in so lowly, a beggar. Her servants did as they were directed, and gave him a little stale gruel, and went away. Satyaparakrama now thought of the fourth maxim in his dearly bought scroll. A mixed feeling of pleasure and pain come over him; pleasure, that though his father had thought him reckless in paying so much for the scroll, it still deserved that price for the valuable way in which it had generalized truths;pain, that his sister should have gone so far as to renounce her natural feelings of affection because he was in reduced circumstances. His hunger was so great that, though what was given him was gruel. —and that, too, stale,—he heartily

drank a portion of it, and left the rest buried with the pan in which it had been served up in the hay-yard adjacent, and left the place.

He next resolved to go to his wife's house, and live there for a while till better days dawned. Travelling many *kos* for several days he at last reached the town where she lived. It was about midnight when he entered it. Everything in the streets was still, and it was very dark. Not knowing which way to turn, our hero was standing in confusion, when he was accosted by a hoarse voice saying, "Who is there?" "A beggar, newly arrived here and standing confussed becuse he does not know the way," replied our hero. "Then you can be my lamp-bearer now, and so earn a night's rest in the outer verandah of my house," said the person who was the *Kotwal* or chief police officer of the city.

Satyaparakrama took the lamp and walked in the direction indicated by the police officer who followed him. The *Kotwal* was a very rich man, and his house was near that of our hero's father-in-law. And what is more, Satyaparakrama's wife used to visit him every night. It was reached at last, and telling the lamp-bearer to wait outside, the *Kotwal* entered it; and at the very threshold he was accosted by a beautiful young lady whose voice was very clearly recognized by the person standing outside.

"What! Is it my own wife, to whom I want to go next morning, that is now talking so very familiarly to the *Kotwal*, and reproving him for having made her wait so long? I must see what is going to happen. Fortune has conducted me here by chance, that I might know about my wife's conduct before going to her house." Thus pondered Satyapara

krama, and the conversation that took place between the lady and the *Kotwal* inside, was more than sufficient to indicate her bad character. Unfortunately for the guilty pair, there were no betel leaves to chew before they retired to bed. "Are we to sleep today without chewing ?" asked the woman: and the *kotwal* at once replied, "Don't be afraid, my dear. The fellow who is waiting with the lamp outside, will fetch us some leaves form the nearest *bazar*." So saying, the *kotwal* searched for his keys. And the woman, not wishing to lose his company for even the time when he would be absent searching for his money, pulled off a ring from her right middle finger. and,giving it to her gallant, said that that would do for the occasion to fetch them some leaves. The police officer came out and called the beggar:— "Hallo! There is a *bazar* at the end of this street where you will find a *chetti* sitting before a lamp with a very small light. Give him this ring, mentioning that the *Kotwal* sent it, and fetch me fifty betel leaves. I will get the ring back tomorrow and give him the price." "Your lordship's orders shall be duly obeyed," said our hero, and instantly disappeared with the ring.

Now our hero did not know that it was his wife that had given the ring as a deposit for a few leaves not worth even a cowry. But the idea that a ring should be sacrificed for a few betel leaves, awakened in his mind sufficient curiosity to make him examine it to see what it was worth. So he took it to a wayside lamp and examined it and found it to be his own ring, given by him to his wife just as she was departing for her parents' house. He was pained to see that a wife, who would not part with her

jewels to save the life and honour of her own husband, should have so easily given up a valuable ring for a few betel leaves ! But at the same time he was glad of the opportunity thus offered him of proving her guilty character when necessary. So, not wishing to lose it or show it to any one,he concealed it in his cloth and proceeded to the *bazar*. He found the *Chetti* there, seated as described, with a very small light, and thus addressed him—" Sir, I am the servant of the *Kotwal* and he has sent me to you for a few betel leaves to chew, the price of which he has promised to pay you tomorrow. If you fail to oblige him now when he is in necessity, he has warned you to take care of your head tomorrow.".

Now *Kotwals* are always objects of dread to the public, and so the poor *Chetti* asked our hero to take as many leaves as he wanted. He took about fifty, and, not to be idle on his way, made them into neat halves and folded them up nicely. The master of the house was waiting outside for him, and Satyaparakrama gave the leaves to him folded in half, and while they were being taken into the house, ran off like lightning for his own safety.

The betel leaves were duly handed over to the woman inside, who at once saw from the manner of folding,which was a special art acquired by her husband, that the pretend, ed servant was no other than her own husband disguised. This made her change colour and stand as still as a statue. "What is the matter with you, my dear, that you pull such a long face at a time when you ought to be merry?" asked the *Kotwal*. " I am undone," cried she; "the person who has so nicely folded these leaves in this fashion must be my husband. He has traced me out, and I am sure that I am lost unless he is now captured and killed."

Meanwhile our hero was flying for his life, for he was sure that his wife would discover him, and send her sinful companion after him. And even so it was. No sooner did the *Kotwal* hear that the pretended servant or beggar was Satyaparakrama, than he left the house, and with all his men began the search for him. Every possible nook and corner of the town was searched with no success, for Satyaparakrama had left the town with the quickness of a serpent and disappeared. But the *Kotwal*, to console the lady, told her that her husband had been caught and killed.

Our hero, after his escape, went through several places, and at last reached a town. All the way he pondered over his wife's conduct, and was vexed to see that he was partly the cause of it, as, by his sending her away for a long while to her parents' house, he had given her every opportunity to become wicked. In this case, too, he found one of the maxims, which he had so dearly bought, had proved true. Thinking on the way, he heard the sing-song noise of a palanquin passing, and on observing it closely he found an old friend of his seated on it. This at once brought into his mind the fifth maxim of the sage, that in adversity we must always seek our friends. To test the truth of it, he proceeded to the side of the palanquin and accosting its inmate in the most familiar style, said:—"Get down, you fool. Are you not ashamed to ride thus in a palanquin while your old friend is walking bare-footed?" The inmate was the young prime-minister of that empire, and was proceeding to the palace. His name was Snehapatra. He did not recognise his friend and school-day companion in his disguise, but being a wise man, he thought that there must be some meaning in the familiarity

and so at once coming down from the palanquin, he asked his friend to take his place. Our hero did so, and the young minister wrote a letter to his wife recommending the guest to her kind care,and telling her to behave to him in every way as to her husband. And secretly he sent a confidential letter to her of which we shall hear more by and bye.

Thus Satyaparakrama was borne in the palanquin, and reached his friend's house, but his friend was not able to accompany him as there was some important business, pretended or real,on account of which he was obliged to be absent. When the minister's house was reached, the mistress thereof showed him every kind of hospitality, and our hero found nothing wanting for his comfort. The day passed and night came on, and after supper Satyaparakrama retired to rest. Just then the minister's wife placed before him her husband's letter, which said that she must behave to her guest as she would to her own husband. But as soon as our hero read it, he rose up and falling down before the lady, he said:—"Madam, you are my mother. For even so must we regard our friends' wives."

Thus saying he shed tears, and that most virtuous woman,— for so she was, as our readers shall soon know,—sent her husband word of what had occurred. This was part of the secret and confidential communication to her. The minister had also secretly informed her that, to see whether the pretended friend, whom he did not know, was a real friend or not, he had tried the trick of offering her up to him for his pleasure, because a true and sincere friend would shudder at the idea. Snehapatra had also arranged with the maid-servants secretly, that the guest

should be watched and arrested in case he made any attempts to violate decency and take advantage of the letter. The minister's wife too had obeyed her lord in every way, divining the meaning of his proceedings. Snehapatra was all the while anxiously waiting in the palace to know the result of his scheme, and as soon as it was communicated to him, he hastened home, embraced his friend, and like an honest man acknowledged his forgetfulness, and asked him who he was. When it was made known that the person whom he had thus tested was no other than the prince Satyaparakrama, his joy knew no bounds. He enquired into the cause which had reduced him to such a poor state, and when all the prince's history had been related in detail, he wept for his friend's calamities. He then told him to forget the past, and live comfortably in his house till better days, which he said would not be far off. Thus, here, too, our hero found the wisdom of the Pandit's maxim.

Snehapatra had an object in saying that it would not be long before his friend saw better days. The emperor of that city was the great emperor of the Pandya country, to whom Satyaparakrama's father used to pay tribute. He had an only daughter who was approaching the marriageable age, and of whom he was very anxious to dispose. But unfortunately he was not able to secure a suitable match to her. The minister knew all this and on the next day secretly tested the emperor's opinion whether His Majesty would have any objection to accept Satyaparakrama as his son-in-law. His Majesty had often heard of the deep learning of the prince, but of the latter part of his life His

Majesty had had no opportunity of hearing. Seeing that the princess was approaching the age when she ought to be married, he consented with delight to the proposal of the minister, and praising him for his timely advice, gave his daughter in marriage to Satyaparakrama. Our hero, too, disgusted with his former wife, was only too glad to get a better one in her place. And this was not all. He gained the empire too, and had his own father for a tributary king, for the emperor's daughter was an only child. Soon after the marriage, he made Satyaparakrama the prince royal and heir apparent to the empire and to put him in the way of governing properly, he gave over the management of the whole country to his charge. Thus did our hero emerge from his adversity and was made a king, chiefly through the assistance of his friend Snehapatra.

The old king at Mathura had no idea of the good fortune that had come to his son, and though he had in haste banished him for his rashness in paying so high a price for the maxims, he afterwards extremely regretted the act. He had sent messengers in several directions to bring back the prince; but every one of them returned after long search, saying that he had been unable to find him. He was visibly growing older day by day, and his only son was banished! So he did not know what to do and pined away in his misery. All these circumstances were duly brought to Satyaparakrama's notice by a spy of his, whom he had despatched to ascertain the state of affairs at Mathura, and not wishing that he should be the source of trouble to his father, he proclaimed his intention of travelling throughout his dominions and seeing perso-

nally the state of his empire. His friend Snehapatra followed in his train, and the old emperor took upon himself to rule during his son-in-law's absence. Our hero proceeded by the same route by which he had originally come. So he had first to visit his former wife's house, but just before going to it, he sent word of his coming and all his wife's people eagerly awaited him.

Except his guilty wife, no one suspected anything, and our hero duly alighted at her father's house. His father-in-law's family were, however, greatly amazed to hear that a young wife was accompanying the king, but as it is usual (in the East) for a king to have more than one wife, they consoled themselves. The royal party were carefully attended to, and the father-in-law showed the greatest regard for his son-in-law whom he had not seen for so long a time. Meanwhile the first wife consoled herself by thinking that the beggar whom she had suspected to be her husband must have been some other fellow, as he had been killed, so far as she knew.

Our hero kept everything to himself for some time, and was kind and affable to every one, so that not a single person in the house suspected what was about to take place. But when the busy day was drawing to a close and night was fast approaching, our hero called his father-in-law to his side and requested him to send for his daughter and the *Kotwal*. It was an imperial mandate not to be disobeyed, and so they both arrived with trembling hearts. The father-in-law of Satyaparakrama, knowing nothing of the intimacy that had been going on between his daughter and the police officer, did not know the reason of the *Kotwal's* being called into the presence, but

being a very shrewd man he suspected something wrong; and so, seeing that he was troubled, and to keep him no more in suspense our hero began thus:—

"It is said by great men that a person has two fathers, —one his own, and the other his wife's. There is a proverb:—Did you present your daughter or did you present your eyes to a person in marriage? When you gave me your daughter in marriage, you became my second father. Have you acted up to the position? When I was a houseless wanderer, banished by my own father, begging for my livelihood, and petitioned to you for help, did you assist me? The jewels which I had given to your own daughter, you saved up, unwilling to part with them for my honour. But what did your own daughter do? She for the sake of a few betel-leaves to chew, parted with this ring on account of the *Kotwal* who now stands before you! Such is your daughter's chastity! I am glad that I have no issue by her. And I shall not spare her nor her sinful companion." Thus saying he explained his wife's conduct in detail, and committed her and her gallant to the limekiln.

Then he resumed his march and reached his sister's city. Before going to the house he despatched a special messenger to her, and she and her husband, *Peshkar*, made special arrangements for feasting the emperor. His Majesty put on a smiling face to every one in the house, but when meal-time arrived and every one had sat down to his supper, he asked one of the servants to fetch the stale gruel in the pan from the hay-stall, and rejecting every grand dish that was served before him, began to eat the dirty old mess. Every one was amazed. Then Satyaparakrama

explained its history to the whole assembly, and also the truthfulness of the maxim that one ought not to seek his sister in adversity. The *Peshkar* and his wife were ashamed, and our hero left that place without speaking a word to any of them after the meal.

Thus passing through these two places our hero reached Mathura, where his father was almost on his death-bed. And when the old man heard that not only had his son become the emperor to whom he himself had to do homage, but also that he was himself coming to do the homage of a son to his old father, his sickness left him in a moment, and he sat up like a healthy man to welcome his son. After shedding tears for his former rash act, and overjoyed to see that that was in a way the cause of his son's greatness, the old man embraced Satyaparakrama, his long lost son. And the son, too, in the joy of the occasion, forgot all his father's former cruelty to him, and kissed his feet. Thus were they again united and lived together for some time.

To reward his friend Snehapatra, who had protected him in his days of trouble, and who had secured him the empire, our hero Satyaparakrama gave him sovereignty over Mathura and made him lord of that kingdom. Then he returned with his old father to his father-in-law, and reigned as emperor over the whole Pandya country.

Thus five of the six maxims having proved true in the cases of Nayanamanohara and Satyaparakrama our hero was only waiting for an opportunity to find the sixth and last maxim true. He was in the habit of taking a nap at noon every day, and, just bofore doing so, of being shampooed by his maids. This always sent him off into a snooze.

One day when he was thus only half asleep, one of the maids said to another near her:—"Sister, see the beautiful face of His Majesty asleep. While possessing such a husband as this moon among men why should the empress visit the minister's house every night? And how is it that our monarch, so skilful in every thing else, is deceived in this matter?" Replied the other:—"You do not know the trick. I have long known it. Every night the empress gives the monarch a cup of milk, in which she mixes some powder which brings on such a profound sleep that he never gets up the whole night. Taking advantage of this, she spends the whole night in perfect security by the side of the minister." The monarch, at the first hint that the conversation was about his wife, was all wakefulness, but snored purposely, to make the maids round him believe that he was really asleep. He heard it all, and was much grieved at heart to hear the scandal about his wife, and resolved to find out the truth of it that very night.

It came on as usual, and just before retiring to bed, the empress brought him a cupful of milk. Said he, "I have left my snuff-box at the place where I supped, will you kindly fetch it, my dear?" To show how very obedient she was to her lord, she ran off in haste, but before her return our hero had upset the milk in a corner of the room, and left the empty cup at the place where it was usually left by his wife. She soon returned with the box, and our hero received it from her hands, thanking her for the trouble, and took a pinch before her. He talked on for some time in a kindly way to her, while she all the while was waiting for the working of the medicine in the milk. She had taken a stolen glance at the cup and to

her heart's joy found it empty. "Surely, he has taken it and he must soon fall asleep," thought she ; and Satyaparakrama, seeing the anxiety in her face, determined to play the villain to catch a villain, and to all appearance fell asleep, while he was really watching the movements of his wife. About a *ghatika* after he began to snore, the empress got up, and quietly placing a long pillow in her place, left the bed. In a moment more she was out of the room.

Satyaparakrama would have given no credit at all to the conversation of the maids, had he not known that he was daily given milk by his wife just before going to sleep. He was so much attached to her that even when he avoided the milk that night he did not altogether suspect her. It might have been the excitement that kept him awake that night. But the suspicious way in which his wife arranged the pillow aroused every doubt. However, he gave her a full opportunity and did not leave his bed until she had time to get well away, and then searched for her secretly through the palace without success. He then proceeded to examine the town in disguise, to see what had taken place. He cursed himself for his stupidity in not having done this long before, and assuming the disguise of a beggar he left his palace by a secret way, and was soon in the streets of the town.

It was a dark night, and the presence of clouds in the sky made it darker still. Signs of approaching rain also set in, and soon the rain began to pour in torrents. In haste he ran for shelter into the outer circuit of a temple of Ganesa,[1] where he found half a

[1] From this point the reader will find this story similar in some respects to some portions of *Ranavirasing*.

dozen neatherds—suppliers of milk to the palace—collected for a similar reason. Our hero, unobserved by them, sat down in a corner. Just then a lizard began to chirp, and one of the neatherds, who was well up in interpreting such things, said:—"Friends, do you know of anything wonderful to-night ?" They said:—"What do we know ? We are not well read like you. Our fathers never taught us anything. If you will come out with one of your wonders we are prepared to listen to you." Said the first speaker:—"I do not know how far it may be true. But if I am to believe in what my old father taught me, I must tell you that the lizard says that our emperor has left his palace tonight and is now in the town." "You are a great idiot,"said one of the others, "to impose upon us with such absurd nonsense. In the dead of night, when it is raining cats and dogs, what could induce an emperor to leave his comfortable palace and expose himself to the wet ? You are a fool to say so." Thus was the neatherd, who had nevertheless told the truth, ridiculed ,while our hero admired from his hiding-place the deep knowledge of one of his own neatherds !

A ghatika after this the lizard again chirped, and the same neatherd said:—"Friends, you disbelieved me on that occasion ; now you shall all know the truth of my statement. The lizard says, that in a minute the empress will pass by this way to the minister's house !"

Again the other neatherds laughed, and said:—"This is still more absurd. You can thus impose on other neatherds that know nothing of the palace. But we are all suppliers of milk to the emperor and empress, and on several occasions we have met them. Oh ! shut your

mouth! Do not think that such a paragon of virtue would ever do such things." Thus did they ridicule him, but the sarcasms were hardly out of their mouths, before they heard the sing-song noise of a palanquin passing. It was a closed one, and they all then thought that after all the soothsayer must have been right in his remarks. But giving the benefit of the doubt to the empress, they still entertained a high regard for her chastity, and went away from that place. The rain had now ceased, and Satyaparakrama, admiring the knowledge of the neatherd soothsayer, and abusing himself for having so doted upon his wife who on such a dreadful night had ventured out so shamelessly to her gallant's house, and pondering over the treachery of which she had been guilty, left the place too.

He had not gone far before there were more signs of impending rain. So he again went into an humble verandah, to lie down and thus avoid the rain. In an opposite corner were sleeping two old Brahman travellers, a husband and wife. They had come the previous evening from Benares, and wanted to see the emperor the next morning and get a present from him.

In the last watch of the night, the old Brahman got up to observe the stars and find out how much longer it would be before the lord of the day would appear in the horizon. While doing so he said:—"We are most unfortunate! The tree for whose shade we have come so far, is to be cut at the root in a few moments." His old wife, on hearing this, was dumb with sorrow for a few moments, and then asked, "What is the matter?" Replied the old pilgrim, "In an hour or so a black serpent will sting the

emperor, and he will die." "Can you not save that good soul who is about to be a great help to poor people like ourselves?" asked the old woman.

The Brahman pointed out to her that, as they were very poor, it would be impossible for them to commence a rite to ward off the evil, because *ghi*, milk and so on would be wanted for it. Our hero overheard all that passed between them, and as if suggesting to them a way out of the difficulty, he asked the poor Brahman to go to the neighbouring house and beg for some money. Accordingly he went, but go where he might he was rebuffed and turned out as a wily beggar who was demanding money under false pretences. The time was fast approaching for the serpent to come, and on wringing his hands at the disappointment of the poor Brahman, our hero felt a ring on his finger which he had entirely forgotten. He at once pulled it off and giving it to the Brahman, said :—"Here is a brass ring. Take it to the *Chetti* in the corner of this street who keeps his shop open by night only; make a good bargain and buy what little this can fetch and begin the serpent-rite."

The old Brahman, glad to find that a beggar should be so merciful, ran to the *Chetti's* shop, and he recognising the emperor's signet-ring in what was presented to him as a brass ring, and wishing to profit by it by returning it to the emperor the next morning, asked the Brahman to take what he liked. He, however, wanted only some rice, firewood and *ghi*, to conduct the snake-ceremony with, and taking these he returned to the verandah. The preparations were hastily made and the fire for the sacrifice lighted up. Several incantations were pronounced over it. In offering

the rice, it was divided into three parts, one of which was presented to the very person on whose behalf the ceremony was undertaken, for the Brahman called the supposed beggar who had assisted him with his brass ring, and threw into his cloth the third ball of rice, throwing the other two into the fire. Just at the close of the ceremony, a long and fat black serpent had secretly approached the spot where Satyaparakrama had been watching the sacrifice, but was unable to do him any harm during the charms performed by the Brahman, and fell before our hero, cut in halves. It was the charm that did this!! Satyaparakrama, after putting the pieces carefully into a spare cloth and warning his benefactors that they should not leave that spot until they had returned his brass ring, left the place secretly with his bundle. He had made the condition about the ring to his benefactors, to prevent them from leaving that place.

Returning home before dawn, he sent several of his servants to the Minister's house, to fetch him over early in the morning. He also sent for all his palace neatherds, to find out who had been the speakers of the previous night, and for the poor Brahman who had put him under the greatest of obligations. As soon as all had arrived, Satyaparakrama asked the soothsayer neatherd to relate the previous night's conversation between himself and his friends. At first he hesitated, but on finding out that the emperor was in earnest, told him everything and begged his pardon. Satyaparakrama rewarded him for his knowledge, and proving the minister's guilt plainly, committed him and his empress to the stakes. The bundle with the halves of the serpent he produced before the poor Brahman pair, and falling down at their feet said that he himself

was the beggar of the previous night. He rewarded them amply and made them stay in the palace with him. Thus the attempts to examine the truth of the sixth maxim, saved our hero's life.

Ever since that memorable day, he made it always his duty to spend part of his nights in going round the town in disguise and relieving people from misery. Two of his wives had proved faithless to him. So he gave up all thoughts of marrying again; but, ever wedded to those six maxims, and praising the day on which he bought them even for so high a price, our hero lived in happiness, conferring peace and prosperity upon his empire.

XXXIV

THE SHOWER OF GOLD AND SCORPIONS

In a certain town there lived a great landholder, whose house was only a small one. One day it occurred to him that it was not in keeping with his position, and having plenty of money to spare, he resolved to build himself a mansion befitting his position. So he called the best workmen round about him, and fixing on an auspicious day according to the recommendation of the local soothsayers, he built the mansion strictly according to the advice of the wise men, and it was soon completed; and then our hero, accompanied by Brahmans reciting the four *Vedas*, by musicians playing on various instruments, and by dancing girls in gay procession, entered and settled in it, finding every part of it to his heart's content. With the feasting of several thousands of Brahmans in its halls, a busy day closed, and all the guests took their leave, leaving the owner to the sole enjoyment of the house. And he, too, much exhausted by attending upon his many guests, took his supper early and with his wife and children retired to rest.

The place being new to him he was unable to sleep that night, and at about midnight he heard a voice saying, "Shall I fall down; shall I fall down?" It proceeded from no person, as far as he could see, but went on and on without any break. Our hero was greatly frightened, thinking it must have proceeded from some devil or other who had got into the house before he had warmed it. He

was also afraid that if he continued to occupy it, the devil would pull the roof down over his head. Horrified at the terrors which his imagination aggravated every moment, he spent the night in the greatest anxiety. And the voice never stopped!

At last the day dawned, and at the first appearance, of the light our hero thought to himself:—"The great God, Mahesvara, has been extremely merciful to me, and has preserved me and my family from the devil throughout this terrible night just past. Surely, if I continue to live here, some day or other I shall be buried alive by the falling debris of my own house! Let the devil enjoy my palace, my old cottage will do for me! In it I have lived comfortably till now, and in it I shall continue to live happily for many a day more."

Thus thinking, the very next morning, after he had occupied his new mansion, our hero quitted it for his old cottage! The suddenness with which he moved back to his old house was in itself more than enough to create a talk throughout the town that the mansion was haunted, and it became a most dreaded spot, and story after story was freely invented to spread its notoriety throughout the country round about.

In that same town there lived a poor beggar Brahman. Beggars are always notorious for having more children than they can support, and in obedience to the rule this Brahman had half a dozen,—three sons and three daughters. They all lived in a miserable hut, where the children were always ill from the damp. Poverty and misery pinched him in every direction, and his troubles increased day by day and hour by hour. At last he became so

disgusted with his life which was a very misery to him, that he often resolved upon suicide. But such an idea is most repulsive to a Hindu, because the darkest world and dirtiest hell are the abode set apart for those who give up their lives in that way. So at last he resolved thus within himself:—"What if I go to the house which is said to be haunted? If I sleep there one night, the devil in it will kill me, and there will be an end of my miseries!"

So thought he, and going to the owner, spoke thus:—"My master! I am very poor. The winter is fast approaching, and I have no house to live in. If you would kindly permit me to live in a room or two of your great unoccupied mansion, I shall be highly obliged."

The owner was at first afraid to give him leave, lest some injury should befall himself. But then it occurred to him that if all went right with the poor Brahman, the evil name it bore would be removed. And wishing to use the Brahman as an experiment, he promised to let him use the house from that next day, and was so kind as to demand no rent! The Brahman recived the keys, and resolved to give up his life by sleeping in the haunted house the next night. Thought he:—"If I die to-morrow, who will protect my six children? None of them are grown up, and I have no relatives or friends in this world to give me or my children a morsel of rice. So if I leave them behind me, it must be more to their misery than anything else. So I shall take them also with me to the haunted house, and there let what happens to me happen to them also."

Thus this wretched Brahman, who had at first resolved to give up his life in the haunted house, changed it into an intention of the wholesale murder of his family.

His wife was the incarnation of virtue, and though she lived in a state of abject poverty, never gainsaid what her husband resolved upon! And so, with his cares laid aside the begging Brahman entered the mansion, apparently to live in it, but at heart in order to sacrifice himself and his whole family to the devil who dwelt there.

The day passed and night approached, and the little children, after partaking of the meagre repast their poor mother could spare for them, retired to rest. They had not even a covering to protect them from the cold of the night. But being accustomed to a hard life, they nevertheless went composedly to sleep. Their poor mother, too, who always consoled herself with the thought that the God who had given her so many children would somehow or other protect them, according to the doctrine—"He never sends mouths without also sending meat," — she too slept soundly. The poor father alone was awake, and as he trimmed the lamp, he took a farewell look at the innocent faces sound asleep around him. Almost immediately he heard the voice:— "Shall I fall down? shall I fall down?" His heart which he had steeled into preparation for death fairly gave way. Buf after deep thought he came back again to his original resolution, and fully determined to die with his whole family and said aloud:— "Why do you thus threaten me who am boldly resolved already? Fall down at once, and take me and my children away."

Thus saying he lifted his head to see the house fall, but instead there rained from the roof a torrent of gold mohars, which soon filled the unoccupied parts of the room. After about a *ghatika* the torrent of gold stopped,

and the Brahman rose up and heaped all the coins in a corner. He then awakened his wife, and related to her all that he had intended and all that had happened. Finding that fortune had begun to favour him, he gathered money every night, and with it bought house and jewels and lands and other things he wanted.

The owner of the house, finding him daily growing richer and richer as a result of dwelling in the haunted house, asked him one day the reason of it, and the Brahman related to him the whole affair without concealing anything. The owner of the property was then very sorry for his cowardice, and at having missed the opportunities previously offered him ; and so he said to the Brahman :— "You have now been a long while occupying my house, will you kindly vacate it for me ?"

The Brahman replied :—" I have been from my birth a beggar, and what I have already gained is more than enough for me. All my present advantages are due to your kindness, and I will vacate it this very moment. Go you and live in it and amass wealth. It is your property."

The owner occupied it without delay, so as to lose no time over his money-making. He did not wait to remove his family, postponing that till the next day. His anxiety was all for the night, and many a time did he curse his timidity for abandoning the mansion at the first sound of "Shall I fall down," and kept on calculating how much money he had already lost by his cowardice. The night approached, and he went into the house to sleep,—or rather to watch. At midnight, just as he was expecting to hear it, a voice fell upon his ear, saying,

"Shall I fall down? Shall I fall down?" He at once fell into a humble posture and said:—"My good gods; excuse my stupidity in having so long refused your good graces. I have come to my proper senses at last. Shower down the *mohars*."

Thus said the owner, and at once the voice stopped, and immediately a torrent, alas! not of *mohars*, but of scorpions, began to descend on our hero, who, looking for the money never noticed them. Going up close, one scratch was enough to give him an idea of the shower! Starting back he observed by the light that, instead of *mohars*, scorpions were falling down from the roof. "Stop," said he, unable to bear the horrid sight, and at once the torrent dried up, and our hero fled from the house, almost mad with pain.

However, he kept what had occurred secret, and resolved to try his luck a second night. Secretly he sent servants to examine the whole house, and kill all the scorpions. Several thousands were killed that day, and the following night our hero tried his luck again, seeing torrents of scorpions, but never a *mohar*!

Then he sent for the Brahman and asked him whether he could show him the *mohars* falling. "Agreed," said he, and on the third night they both slept in the mansion. At midnight when the voice was heard, and the permission was given, a torrent commenced. The very sight of it frightened away our hero; but the Brahman never stirred a step and employed himself in heaping up the fall.

"Are you a magician or sorcerer, that these scorpions do not injure you?" cried our hero, from a respectful distance. "No, my master!" replied our Brahman; "these are all coins and not scorpions."

Then the owner found out that what appeared to him as scorpions, were *mohars* to the Brahman, and calling him to his side, said with much respect :—" Holy Brahman, you are indeed fortunate. Take this house and reap the benefit of your good luck. If you give me anything after getting it, I shall be happy to receive it. As for myself, all these coins appear to me as scorpions." Thus said the rich landlord, and made the Brahman master of the mansion, and the latter, being a good man, freely shared whatever he got from the house with the owner of it.

The moral as drawn by the Tamil people is, that he who is fortunate will get a thing, while the unfortunate will never get it.

XXXV

THE KOMATTI THAT SUITS THE STAKE

In the city of Punganur there lived a merchant, of the Komatti caste, named Ankusetti. He had been very rich, but, having lost all his wealth in speculative transactions, he was in very reduced circumstances at the time that our story commences. He was, however, still the owner of a big house, which he had, when affluent, built to live in.

In those good old days lime and mortar were unknown, and houses were generally built of mud and Ankusetti's mansion was no exception to the rule, and in an unusually severe winter a great portion of the back of it had fallen down. Weeping much over the damages that the rains had done, and true to his love for the only property left to him in this world, he gave orders for its repair. In those days, when labour was very cheap and the cost of materials extremely low, repairing a house was not a difficult undertaking. Half a dozen coolies mixed some water and clay and made some balls of mud, and, heaping these one over the other, soon patched up the gaps.

Now Ankusetti's house was a large one, and a thief, who had no idea of the real state of Ankusetti's wealth was led astray by the size of his mansion and so on a certain night, soon after the repairs had been made, he bored a hole into the back wall. But unfortunately for the scoundrel, the weight of the still undried mud of the repaired

part of the wall descended upon him just as he was putting his head in, and before he could withdraw it, the weight of the whole wall was on his neck and he died without a struggle. As this took place in a corner at the back of the house, the inmates knew nothing of it till their attention was called to it in the following manner:—

The thief had spoken about his intended adventure to a comrade, who missing him and suspecting something wrong, had been searching for him for nearly two days when he discovered the body sticking out of the wall of Ankusetti's house. He at once preferred a complaint before the king, that Ankusetti had killed his comrade. At that time an extremely stupid king, named Mahamuda (great fool) reigned over the kingdom of Punganur, who was surrounded by equally stupid ministers ; and as soon as the complaint was made, he ordered his servants to arrest Ankusetti at once, and in due course the poor merchant stood before the king ! Said the king:—"Why did you raise up a wet wall, and thereby kill a thief?"

"Your excellent Majesty!" said the poor merchant, "It was not my mistake. The cooly whom I engaged for the repairs built the wall. He must account for it."

The cooly was at once summoned and questioned. Said the king:—" Why did you, O cooly, make the wall wet, and thereby cause the death of a man ?"

Said the cooly:—"Most gracious king, it was not my mistake. The cooly who handed me the mud for raising the wall, gave it me mixed with more than the usual quantity of water."

At once the second cooly too was summoned. Said the king:— "Why did you give mud mixed with an unusual quantity of water, and thereby cause the death of a human being?"

Said the second cooly:—"Most mighty severeign! It was not my mistake. The pot from which I was using the water, had a wide mouth, and so while I was engaged in my business, more than the proper quantity fell out and made the mud watery. So the potter who made the pot, is responsible for the mistake."

The potter was at once sent for and questioned. Said the king:—" Potter! Why did you make the mouth of the pot wide, and thereby cause the death of a human being?"

Said the potter:—" Most supreme sovereign! It was not my mistake that the mouth of the pot was so wide. The day on which I was shaping that pot on my wheel, I noticed a dancing girl passing along the street. My attention was thus diverted. Though my hand was engaged in the work, my mind was absent from it, and the mouth of the pot became wide. So she is responsible for the mistake."

The dancing-girl was at once summoned. There was some difficulty at first in finding out the exact girl, but the potter, who had observed her minutely, gave a complete description of her, and she stood before His Majesty. But she had taken care previously to attire herself in her best clothes, and to wear her choicest jewels. Said the king:—"Why did you, vile woman, pass by the potter on the day on which he was shaping his pots, and divert his

attention, which made the mouth of the pot wide, and thereby indirectly you caused the death of the thief?"

Said the dancing-girl:—"Most beautiful king! I had given a jewel to be reset by a goldsmith, and I was proceeding to demand it from him. Had he returned it in time, I would never have left my house. So he is the cause of the death!"

The king, who was already pleased by her address, now summoned the goldsmith for his explanation. The goldsmith argued that a small quantity of gold was wanting for the jewel he was resetting, and that he had been very careful to demand it often and often from a Komatti who traded in the higher metals. As he refused to give it in time, he was delayed in preparing the jewel. The Komatti was at once summoned, and as he belonged to a class of people not generally intelligent, he had no excuse. The king and his ministers at once set him down as the person responsible for causing the death of the thief, and passed orders that he should be driven to the stake, and impaled, for causing the death of the thief!

Thus usually ends the story, to which is generally attached the moral:—"Never live in the Kingdom of the Tughlaqs." It is also said that the ministers commented upon the Komatti's stoutness, a peculiarity of the class brought on by want of exercise and sedentary habits, and said that that also showed he was the proper person for the stake; hence the proverb,—"*Kaluvukketta Komatti*, the Komatti that suits the stake."

To the above story, the ingenuity of South Indian story-tellers has given a clever additional point, to bring into prominence the king's extreme stupidity.

When the innocent Komatti, who had failed to give the gold in time, was ordered to the stake, no one thought the punishment unjust except two men, for such was the supreme stupidity that reigned throughout that whole kingdom of Punganur! These two were the greatest of rogues, but for all their bad character they pitied the innocent victim of Punganur logic, which argued that the fittest person for capital punishment was the most rotund of body! So they picked up a sham quarrel between themselves, in the hope of averting the evil fate of the innocent Komatti jeweller, and purposely made so much noise as to attract the attention of the king and his officers.

Said the king :—"What are you fools making all this noise for on such an occasion?"

Said the first rogue :—"Most Gracious Majesty! It has been pronounced by eminent astrologers that whoever gives up his life at the stake on this occasion, is destined to be re-born as the king of Punganur! I want to go to the stake, but this wretched fellow won't let me, as he is so anxious to go himself."

Then turning to the second rogue, he continued: "Out upon you, you fool, you shall not forestall me. I am stronger than you!"

Said the second rogue, pretending to disregard the presence of the king :—"If you think that I am weak, there is my sovereign to support me."

Then turning towards the king, he said:—"'Most Gracious Majesty! Let me be driven to the stake meant for the Komatti; for then I shall be re-born as a king. What is the use of being for ever poor and miserable? Better

give up life with a cheerful countenance, than bear all the miseries of poverty. Death is troublesome only for a moment, but poverty is troublesome for the whole term of life. So, I appeal to your graciousness to order this person to be taken away to prison for assaulting me, and to permit me to proceed to the stake in the place of the Komatti."

Letting the rogues go on fighting with each other, the king deliberated for a while and then broke silence:—"None of you wretches shall usurp my kingdom! What! Are you fools, that you attempt such impossibilities? I will never have my throne occupied by such paupers as you! Let the Komatti be released! I shall myself proceed to the stake, and be re-born again as the king of my own country.

So saying, the king gladly had himself impaled, while his stupid ministers cheered! Thus the foolish king gave up his life, and the rogues, who by their tricks could bend his subjects to any of their whims, easily got possession of the kingdom, and reigned as king and minister!

XXXVI

THE WISE MEN OF PUNGANUR

THE MADRASI GOTHAM

A generation or two before Mahamudha, there lived in the kingdom of Punganur a king named Nirbuddhi ('the witless'). Beyond eating, sleeping, and hunting wild beasts, he knew of no pleasures. He was extremely weak in intellect, and as usual was sorrounded by equally stupid ministers. Stupidity was the sole possession of His Majesty and the officers of his court; stubbornness and ready execution of orders, their rule of life; and as to knowledge of any thing but what came before their eyes, they had none. One virtue of Nirbuddhi's court was—if it may be termed a virtue—that, whatever the sovereign commanded, the court was ready to obey, and that too at the cost of life!

It is the custom at courts, in villages, and at bathing *ghats* in India, for a Brahman to read out of a palm-leaf book, generally called the *panchang*, the asterism, lunar date, etc., of each day, so that people may know them and be careful to perform the prescribed rites so essential for a Brahman and others ot the twice-born caste. In accordance with this rule a poor Brahman of Punganur used to proceed to the palace and read out the particulars of each day from the *panchang*. This he did of hereditary right, as his father and grandfather had done before him, and so there was nothing unusual about it.

On a certain day, just as the king had got out of his bed and sat outside his palace on a cot with a big vessel full of water to wash his face and teeth in, the *panchang*-reading Brahman appeared at his regular morning duty and read out from a palm-leaf book, which he carried under his left arm, thus:—

"Om! This day is Sunday, the fifteenth day of the month of Magha in the year Khara. The lunar day (*tithi*) to-day is Ekadasi[1]. Ekadasi lasts up to the eleventh *ghatika*. Then Ekadasi goes out and Dvadasi comes in. The *rahukala* (evil time) to-day is at twenty-six and a quarter *ghatikas*. May there be prosperity to all!"

Having thus read out the Brahman was slowly closing his oblong book with a stealthy look at His Majesty's face to see how Nirbuddhi appreciated his remarks. But the storm had already begun. The royal face changed colour.

"Stop, you mischievous Brahman!" he said.

The unfolded book dropped down and the timid creature stood shivering with fear and confusion.

"What is the meaning of this stuff that you are daily muttering? You cannot deceive me as you deceive the public, by the holy ashes so profusely smeared over you and your *rudraksha* beads. You come to my court daily in the morning and mutter that Dvitiya[2] goes out Tritiya[2] comes in; Ekadasi[2] goes out Dvadasi[2] comes in; and so on. I understand! Some one goes out daily and some one comes in without my knowledge; I do not like such a state of affairs in my kingdom. So I now order that

[1] The eleventh day of a lunar fortnight.

[2] The 2nd, 3rd, 11th and 12th days of a lunar fortnight.

neither shall Ekadasi go out, nor shall Dvadasi come in. Will you see to it or not ?" roared out the king.

The harsh tone of His Majesty made his numerous ministers assemble round him and wait with impatience for the Brahman's reply !

After bowing he said respectfully:—"Most gracious sovereign, permit this mean dog from our wide Kingdom to say that Ekadasi and Dvadasi are *tithis*,[3] not to be perceived by mortal eyes, and that it is altogether impossible to prevent the one from going out or the other from coming in."

"Stop your mouth ! you vile Brahman," roared out many voices, and for very fear he had to do so.

"Neither shall Ekadasi go out, nor shall Dvadasi come in," roared out His Majesty, and when the Brahman again said that it was impossible, he was at once ordered to jail. A hundred hands were at once at his throat, and he was pushed out of the palace and thrown into prison.

Then His Majesty thus addressed his chief minister:- "Did you hear what that vile wretch said ? That Ekadasi and Dvadasi are *tithis*, not to be perceived by mortal eyes. Do you think that there is anything in this world which would escape our sight ?"

"No, my most gracious sovereign!" said the chief minister.

"Then to business," continued the king; "you must set a strict watch over the town and guard every nook and corner, and see that no person goes out of the town at the eleventh ghatika to-day, and that no person enters the town at that time."

[3] Days in a lunar fortnight.

"Agreed," said the minister, "I shall keep so strict a guard that even the breeze will find it difficult to move in or out."

"Again," said the king; "Ekadasi and Dvadasi may be jugglers, and they may assume some curious shapes, and thus, defeating our vigilance, may go out or come in. Take care that no object, either animate or inanimate, brute or mortal, comes in or goes out at the eleventh ghatika. Let the time-announcers be strictly warned to give out every second of each *ghatika* to-day, that you and your soldiers my have your eyes wide open at that exact time."

"All this shall be duly attended to," nodded the chief minister. And many voices were heard extolling the king to the skies at his sagacity in giving such very strict injunctions. His Majesty, not to take up any more of the precious time of his chief minister, ordered him off to his duty, and went into his palace.

The chief minister was entirely lost in admiration for some minutes at the forethought with which the king had given him so many valuable instructions, congratulated himself on his good fortune in having been placed under the benign rule of such an intelligent monarch, and, not to lose any more time in mere praises, got up from his seat. Every soldier in Punganur was proud of his service that day, and of showing his zeal and energy in guarding the kingdom, and swore an oath that he might be called a bastard if he allowed the Ekadasi to escape. The minister too was very proud to see so many faithful followers, and, assembling all the soldiers, arranged them in a circle

round the city. Everyinch was thus most carefully guarded, and the minister, as he rode round and round, saw many a soldier stretching out his hands and swearing that he would break the head of Ekadasi just as he would a ripe cocoanut, if he would only pass his way. Thus was the town most carefully guarded. The minister went his rounds, and the time-announcers bawled out every second with all their might all day long, and there was only one second more for the eleventh *ghatika* to be finished!

"Attention! Care!" roared out the minister. There was no stir anywhere. Even the elements dreaded on that occasion the power of the minister and his zealous soldiers!

"Eleventh *ghatika*," roared the time-announcer. Just at that moment a rat ran out close by the minister.

"Ekadasi is going out in the disguise of a rat," he shouted.

"Catch him, pull him to pieces," responded many voices. But alas! the rat had already disappeared into his hole in the ground!

"Out upon you, fools! What will our sovereign say when he comes to know that so many of us were on guard to-day and still allowed Ekadasi to escape?" mourned the minister.

"No, my lord, let us bore holes and trace out the disguised Ekadasi," said many voices and at once the operation commenced.

The news, that, at the exact time declared by the Brahman, Ekadasi in the disguise of a rat had escaped and thus gone out spread like wild-fire throughout the

town. Cursing himself for not being on the spot, the king appeared on the scene, and it was a great consolation to him that Ekadasi had entered into a hole, for, wherever he might have gone, he would trace that hole to its very source and take Ekadasi prisoner. Thus consoled, after a volley of abuse, he told his minister to go and govern his kingdom in his stead, exercising paternal care over every one, until he came back bringing Ekadasi prisoner. It might be the work of a few hours or weeks or months or years, but until the return of the sovereign the minister was to reign over Punganur. Thus was the matter settled. The minister cursed himself for his carelessness at the eleventh *ghatika* and his failure to catch the runaway *tithi.* However, he consoled himself that he had yet ample opportunities of regaining his lord's favour by good government during his absence in pursuit of Ekadasi.

The king set to work with two hundred of his most faithful soldiers, and went on tracing the holes, for one led into another, and before the close of the day he was over five *kos* away from his kingdom. First a rat, then a mouse, and then a bandicoot, would run out and hide itself in another and yet another hole.

"There goes Ekadasi disguised as a mouse, and now as a bandicoot," bawled out the soldiers.

Thus the search continued for several days. Every one worked hard from morn to eve, and rested his weary limbs all night, to begin work with renewed energy the next day. Still Ekadasi remained uncaught, and the soldiers undiminished in their zeal and energy as long as the runaway was yet at liberty and the king in the camp.

Meanwhile the minister, true to his master's orders, governed Punganur as a father would his family. The oppressors were punished, the weak were protected, and justice in the peculiar fashion of Punganur was administered to every one who asked for it. The ladies in the seraglio of the king were carefully attended to. Orders were issued that the minister was keeping watch over the kingdom day and night, and that every soul might go to him freely at any time, day or night, and claim his attention and service. Thus was the government of Punganur carried on in excellent fashion, and no one felt for a moment the absence of their gracious king who had gone out in pursuit of Ekadasi. In this way a full month passed, till there came the first night of the second month and about the eleventh *ghatika*, when the minister was sitting on the outer verandah of his house, chewing betel-leaves after his supper all alone, and revolving in his mind certain new plans and methods of government to be adopted next day, suddenly there came runing a maid-servant of the queen gasping for breath.

"What is the matter ? Is the Rani Amma well ! Quick ! Speak !" said the minister changing colour at the sudden appearance of the woman and his body perspiring profusely partly at the fear excited by such an unexpected visit, and partly from the chewing of warm betel-leaves.

"Oh, great minister," gasped the maid "God alone must protect us. Our Rani always sleeps soundly every night, and as usual went to bed at the fifth *ghatika* to-night and soon fell into a good snore. We stood round her fanning her as is our duty, when at the seventh *ghatika* her snoring stopped and she said '*ha*,' and turning on her left

side began to snore again as usual. We have never heard her say 'ha' before in her sleep; so we have come running to consult you as to the cause of it," gasped the maid.

The minister pondered a while and said:—

"The utterance of '*ha*' usually succeeds a poisonous bite. I fear that some serpent has stung Her Majesty. But let us not be rash. You had better fly back to her again and continue your strict watch. If again you observe her say '*ha*' in her sleep and turn on her side report it at once to me. Be off at once to your duty."

The maid ran away, and the minister, thinking it unwise to sleep that night, kept wide awake. If a leaf was stirred by the breeze, he imagined it to be the maid coming in again. And at last even so it was, for she appeared again at the fifteenth *ghatika* and reported that a second, 'ha' was uttered in her sleep by the Rani.

"Be not confused! Patience is the motto of great men! Let us hear it a third time, and then we shall be certain that the poison is working. And it won't be too late to commence the cure. Go and watch over Her Majesty."

Thus the minister again dismissed the maid, but two *ghatikas* were scarcely over before the maid appeared for the third time with tears in her eyes and said:—: "Alas! minister, God is cruel! We are undone! The Rani uttered 'ha, ha,' twice, this time! What shall we do?"

The minister did not know what to do, and despatched a hasty messenger to fetch the serpent-doctor.

"Say that the minister requires his services to attend on the Rani, who has been bitten by a serpent," said the minister, and off the messenger flew with the swiftness of a kite.

The doctor's house was reached, but he was not at home, for he had gone out on the previous day to a neighbouring village five *kos* off, and a messenger went in pursuit of him. Meanwhile the doctor's son, who was also a serpent-doctor on a smaller scale than his father came to the minister.

"Your father is not here then ?" said the minister.

"No, my lord ; but he will be here early in the morning ; but what does your lordship require ? My services are at your disposal. I have been for the last ten years a regular student at the feet of my venerable father," replied the boy-doctor.

"Then," said the minister ; "the Rani is stung by a serpent. You must cure Her Majesty at once of the poison."

"Alas," continued the boy, "I have not yet come to that chapter of the book, but I have heard my father say often that the curing of poisonous bites is an extremely easy thing, provided that the poison has not ascended up to the head. So, as a precaution, I would advise that the head be separated from the body, so as to make sure that the venom has not ascended there. If this advice is followed, the cure may be commenced at any time."

" You are a clever doctor, though still a boy. It is most unfortunate that your studies have not yet reached the chapter on poisons. But let us not be wasting time.

Well, maid, go back at once to the seraglio, and without the least disturbance sever the head of the queen from her body and keep it detached. We shall know if the poison has killed her, when the doctor arrives in the morning. Here is my signet-ring, which will stop any one who might want to prevent you from carrying out my orders."

Thus, giving his signet-ring to the maid servant and sending the boy-doctor home, the minister retired for a short sleep.

The head of the Rani was, alas ! in strict accordance with the orders of the minister, severed from her body, and in a second life went out of her, for no other cause but that of the extreme stupidity of the Punganur State ! Morning dawned, and the old doctor with the messenger returned home, bringing with him his bag containing the rare medicines. He was no doubt a clever man in his profession, but his son, who had reached the Punganur standard of wisdom, reported to him the advice he had given. The father cursed himself on having begotten such a son, and his only thought now was how to rescue himself and his son from the consequences of the murder of the Rani. Luckily, nothing was impossible in the kingdom of Punganur. So, hiding his confusion, he stood before the minister, who took him without the loss of a moment to the seraglio. There the body of the queen lay in its blood, minus its head.

"What do you say now ? Put the head straight at once and begin your cure," cried the minister.

"Alas ! most mighty minister ! The maids have been a little careless in placing the severed head. It should not

have been placed exactly opposite the trunk. The poison has taken the opportunity to travel into the head by the direct road left open! There is no hope of life now! If they had kept the head in any other direction but that exactly opposite, I could have opened my bag and ground my medicine. Now even Dhanvantari[4] himself would find it impossible."

Thus said the old doctor, and put on a mournful face. The minister believed every word he had said, and so did the maids, and fell to quoting the fatalistic argument that the queen had lived out her destined life. So what was the use of mourning over the past? The dead body must be cremated.

"The dead close their eyes in peace; the living have to undergo all the trouble and expense of cremating the body as the proverb has it, argued the minister to himself. "The queen is dead. The king is now absent in the pursuit of Ekadasi. He won't return till that wretched *tithi* is caught. The corpse connot wait till then. I cannot cremate it in the ground reserved for that purpose; for this is not an ordinary corpse. The king might think himself insulted. She was his queen, while living. I shall not diminish her honour in death, but will cremate her body in the palace, at the very spot where she died. If a portion of the palace is burnt down, I can easily have it repaired; but it is impossible to repair the displeasure of an enraged king.

Thus pondering and pondering over the subject, the Punganur minister gave orders for the funeral pile to be heaped upon the very spot where the queen had died. Sandal-wood, blackwood and every costly wood were

4 The god of medicines.

used ; *ghi* was poured on the pyre in profusion : and none had the courage to gainsay the orders of the minister, or the sense to foresee the evils they would produce. The body was set on the pile,and the fire lighted, and not only the pyre but the whole palace was in flames !

Now, it is considered the greatest of insults in Hindu society, to put out the fire of the funeral pyre until the body is consumed. So, notwithstanding that the whole palace was in flames, the minister never thought of putting out the fire.

Pondered he:—"What would the king think of me if I,his minister,—his servant,—put out the fire before the body of the queen is consumed? Let the palace, or even the whole town, be burnt down; but let no one dare to quench the funeral fire." Thus did he order, and almost half of the town was in flames by the time the body of the queen was entirely burnt. By that time, the fire raged so severely that no one dared to approach it. No amount of ordinary water could quench it. What was to be done?

Just then a thought came into the mind of the minister that it would be the wisest course to break open the embankment of a big lake five *kos* long and five *kos* broad situated at the western end of the town and on a higher level ! The order was executed in a moment, and a huge volume of water rushed down in full force, and in the twinkling of an eye had carried away almost the whole town, and of course quenched the fire. The minister and other high officials of the State guided by the instinct of self-preservation, had located themselves, with many others who were destined to live, on the embankment and were thus saved.

When the body of the queen had been thus cremated and the fire quenched, the minister thought it his duty to send a full report of his administration to the absent king. He filled several pages with a florid account of his good government, in terms which may be left to the imagination. He dwelt at length on his administration of the Punganur kingdom since his master had left it, on the queen's death from the poisonous bite, on the remedies he adopted, on the supremacy of fate, on his own ideas of cremating her body, on its successful accomplishment, on the iron hand of fate that had set the town in flames, on the course he followed to quench the conflagration and on the procedure he adopted to relieve the sufferers.

He had two very trustworthy peons under him: one a *Nayak*, named Kondal Nayakan, and another a Muhammadan named Miran Sa. These two were jealous of each other, and each wanted to have the honour of carrying the report in person to His Majesty. The minister chose Miran Sa, and giving the document to him, ordered him to proceed to the king.

Great was the joy of Miran Sa, not that he himself was chosen, but that Kondal Nayak was *not* chosen. He took the huge document, tied it in a kerchief round his loins, and marched off in haste. In his joy at the special honour conferred upon him, he walked fast the whole day and almost the whole night, till at last nature began to exert her influence and overpower his zeal. Just at the third *ghatika* before the dawn of the second day of his journey, he lay down under a tree to rest a while, and fell into a profound sleep. The spot where he slept was near the kingdom of Karvetnagar, and in a neighbouring village

there lived a barber, who used every morning to go to the palace of Karvetnagar to shave the king; but, however fine and sharp his razor might be, the king always found fault with him for being a bad hand at his work. Now the barber happened to pass by the spot where Miran Sa was asleep, and thought he to himself:—

"The king always accuses me of being a bad hand at shaving. I shall just test the truth of his remarks. Here is a person asleep, and if I successfully shave him without rousing him, what doubt will there be then that I am a first-rate barber?"

Thus resolving, he placed his cup with water in it before the sleeping peon and set to work. First he shaved Miran Sa's beard clean off, and twisted up the Muhammadan's moustache into the form and cut of a Nayak's. He then applied the Nayak caste mark to Miran Sa's forehead, and setting a glass in front of the sleeper, replaced his razor and cup in his bag, and, glad at heart that he had shaved a sleeping person without disturbing him and that he was a very clever hand at his work, he proceeded to Karvetnagar.

A *ghatika* or two after the barber had left, Miran Sa awoke from his sleep. He saw his face reflected in the glass in front of him. The Nayak cut of his moustache and the mark on his forehead were prominently noticed by him.

Said he in amazement to himself:— "What after all, the minister has deceived me! I prided myself yesterday that the minister had sent Miran Sa to the king.[5] Now I

[5]This is an extremely fine specimen of Punganur wisdom, where a person, forgetting his own identity, imagines to himself that he is a different person, and argues to himself as if he were sometimes himself and sometimes another.

see that the person that goes to the king is not Miran Sa but Kondal Nayakan! Ah! vile minister. You have deceived me. You have not sent Miran Sa, but Kondal Nayakan, to the king. However, I shall soon have an opportunity of carrying tales to the king. I shall report to His Majesty how you deceived me, by sending Miran Sa first and Kondal Nayakan afterwards."

Thus argued the transformed Miran Sa, and rose up and proceeded to the King and handed him the administration report. The king read over the whole document with the greatest imaginable pleasure, and was apparently satisfied with every act of his minister! What else could the readers expect from a fool who was in pursuit of Ekadasi? At the last page His Majesty stopped and said:—

"What a fool the minister is! He has filled so many pages with every possible information, but is silent on a most important point. There were several kinds of fish in the Punganur lake. He has not said a word about them. Where did they go when the embankment was cut open? What became of them? Why has the fool not put in a word about it?"

Just as the monarch finished his last sentence, the transformed Miran Sa said:—"Most gracious sovereign, I can give Your Majesty the information needed, for I was that day on the very spot. As soon as the embankment was cut open and the waters rushed out, all the fish in the lake climbed up the babul trees which are so numerous on the bank, and building their nests there, are living safe in them at this very moment!"

Thus said Miran Sa, or Kondai Nayakan, as you may choose to term him. The king was highly pleased, as he was sure to see his fish in their nests on the *babul* trees on his return to his kingdom! For the great consolation thus given him in good time, he appointed Miran Sa to the minister's post and ordered him to govern Punganur in his absence, and degraded the minister who had omitted to remark on the fish in his report. Thus Miran Sa without any effort of his own, got the minister's place, and receiving the order, started back for Punganur. But all the way he was in great doubt as to who had been made minister — Miran Sa or Kondal Nayakan! "God must descend from his high place in heaven to clear up such a doubt!" said he, as he returned to Punganur, and took his seat as Viceroy of Punganur.

While all these changes were taking place, Ekadasi remained uncaught. The more they searched, the more distant seemed the hope of ever catching him. Sometimes he took the form of a bird and flew away, and sometimes he was transformed into a hare. Thus there was no end to his jugglery, transformations and transmigrations. The king had already been in pursuit of him for nearly a year, and there was still no hope of Ekadasi being caught, and of the king returning to Punganur.

In the Karvetnagar State, there lived an intelligent Brahman who had long been a witness of the mad acts of Nirbuddhi, and it seemed to him that there would be no end to them. He pitied the stupidity of the monarch, and wanted to convince him of his foolishness by a simple example. He hired a palanquin and half a dozen bearers. Seating himself in it, he ordered the bearers to carry him with a loud sing-song howl through Nirbuddhi's camp.

"If the king asks you who goes in the palanquin, tell him that Ekadasi, the Brahman, rides in it."

Thus instructing the bearers, the Brahman proceeded in his palanquin, and Nirbuddhi heard a great sing-song howl near his camp.

"Stop that palanquin ! Who is he that dares to ride in it so boldly, notwithstanding that Our Majesty is encamped here ?" Thus said the king, and the bearers replied as already instructed by the Brahman.

Thought the king :—"Blessed be my life to-day ! I have been searching almost a whole year for Ekadasi ! This Brahman, who is named after him, must be able to give me some clue as to how to catch him."

Thus thinking, he saluted the Brahman, and requested him to help in catching Ekadasi.

The Brahman came down from the palanquin, and said :—"Most gracious monarch ! We are all men. Ekadasi is god. We cannot catch him. Since you have been in pursuit of him, he has been to Punganur twenty-four times, and returned back to his palace."

"What !" said the astonished king. "How can he go to Punganur, while so many of us are pursuing him ? I saw him last evening running away as a hare."

"No, my supreme lord ! you are wrong. Can you prevent the sun from going to Punganur by all your vigilance ? It must go and return every day : is it not so ? Even so Ekadasi travels with the sun, and appears once on every fifteenth day at Punganur as the sun appears there every day."

This simple illustration at last convinced the king that all his efforts to catch the Ekadasi were a mad-man's project after all! He returned to his kingdom, and, appointing Ekadasi, the Brahman, as his minister, reigned for a long time. Owing to the intelligence of this minister, the kingdom improved a little, but they say that it took several generations for it to reach the level of the intelligence of its neighbours!

XXXVII

THE STORY OF ATIRUPA

In the country of the Setupatis there lived a famous astrologer named Satyavak. All through the country he was known as the greatest astrologer living, and it was said that whatever he foretold never proved untrue. Many came from the remotest parts of the earth to consult him, and to every one he imparted his advice gratis, never taking even a *kaudi* from any one who came to him. Nor was Satyavak rich. He was almost a pauper, although he was, at that time, the greatest authority on astrology. His only means of livelihood was begging for alms. He would take a bowl in his hand exactly at the tenth *ghatika* of the day,and go about from house to house collecting rice. As soon as there was enough in his bowl to feed two people for the day, he would return home and hand over the rice to his wife. His only relative in this world was his wife. All the others he had ost. She was an extremely polite, contented and educated woman, and whatever her husband gave her she received with a cheerful countenance.

The pair led a happy life, notwithstanding their poverty, till, one day, the wife thought to herself :— "My lord is the greatest authority in a department of knowledge, which is most eagerly sought after by high and low. From the Setupati to the meanest subject dwelling in this country all consult him. Daily from early morning to the tenth *ghatika* of the day he spends his time in giving

advice. From the tenth to the fifteenth *ghatika* he goes out begging, and returns home only with enough to feed him and myself for the day. Again, in the evening he spends his time in giving advice. What is his object in thus freely giving away his hard-earned knowledge for nothing? Here we are, husband and wife, and do we not want some money to make ourselves comfortable? When there is every opportunity for his earning a good income and even amassing great wealth, why should he be thus careless of utilizing it and thereby make himself rich? There must be some reason for it. I have been thus patiently bearing up till now. To-night I shall ask him." Thus thought she, and, reserving her curiosity till night should fall, she calmly waited for its approach.

Now, as soon as the heavy work of the day was over, Satyavak used to retire for the night with his wife, but this night he missed the usual cheerfulness from her face. She seemed a little sad, and he knew very well that he had done nothing during the day, or indeed at any time, to displease her, for they were a most affectionate couple. So, being unable to guess the cause of her sadness, he thus spoke to her:—

"My dear wife! What is the matter with you to-night? We are leading such a holy and innocent life that even the higher powers should dread us! Such being the case, can any human being have dared to offend us? Who has done you harm? What is the reason of your downcast-looks? Speak out, my love, and the offender, whoever he may be, shall cease to live! For, however poor we may be, our influence is so great, that we can soon bring the culprit to justice."

Thus spoke her husband, and ashamed of the weakness which had displeased her husband who spoke so nobly, notwithstanding their poverty, and who, as she knew, valued wealth as nothing, she thus answered :—

"Most mighty husband, I know very well that, as long as I have the honour of being your wife, no being either on earth or heaven would dare to offend me. Your virtue ever stands by me as my guardian spirit. Your very name enables me to roam over the whole world chaste and pure. Even fire would fear to touch me ! Such are the powers conferred on you by your virtue and good conduct ; but, for all my happiness in this world in having you for my lord, I was made a little sad to-day from pondering over in my mind as to why my lord should choose to be so very poor, when there is ample opportunity to make himself rich. I could not understand why my husband, while he could afford to live like a king, should go begging every day. It was only this that made me sad and nothing else, and I respectfully request you now to dispel this confusion from my mind."

Thus ended the wife, and Satyavak, smiling at her womanish simplicity, thus began :—

"My dearest wife! After all, you have shown yourself to be a very woman! I took you to be much above that kind of thing. Having spent the whole of my life in astrology, do you think that I have been so careless as not to cast our own horoscopes and to foresee our future? If I had known that the acquisition of wealth would have made us happy, and would put us in a better condition hereafter, I should have been the greatest of fools to have disregarded it. What is wealth after all ? It is an empty bauble, never steady for

even a single moment. The acquisition of a small quantity of it fires the soul with the ambition to acquire more, till life is lost in the pursuit and all other duties forgotten. The last rung of that ladder has never been reached yet by any one. All who have been thus engaged, have given up their lives without ever having attained the full height of their ambition. People amass wealth,— hoard after hoard,— and still they sigh because further hoards are wanting. Wealth is the worst demon that ever lived in this world. In his pursuit sins are committed, to wash away which even the holy waters of the Ganges or of the sacred *Samudra Rája* (ocean) have no power. Even wealth honestly got, if minutely examined, would be found to have, here and there, some flaws in it. It is to save ourselves from sins incident to the acquisition of wealth that I have been leading this simple and innocent life. As I have already told you, you are only a woman after all, and have fallen into the weakness of your sex in imagining that it is money that makes one happy, and not other and better things. I have to tell you now that we are to have no children in this world to be of service to us in our old age. Our horoscopes say that. How then would any amount of wealth make you happy ? Foreseeing all this, and, not wishing to make our already unfortunate life in this birth (janma) still more unfortunate at our next birth, I have chosen my present mode of life. These are my reasons. As a sensible woman you must agree with me. What have we to care for in this world ? Our own name and fame ! I see that my remark, that we are to have no children, has already changed the colour of your face. You need not be so very sorry. I qualified that statement with the remark 'to be of service to us in our old age.' We shall have a boy in our sixtieth year,

but he will not be of much use to us. And you must not ask me any more questions!"

Thus said Satyavak, and his wife, who was all the while listening most eagerly to him, blamed herself for her imprudence in having shown her weakness to her husband, and, being a good and educated lady, she readily perceived all the various points and arguments which made her lord adhere to the life he was then leading. Notwithstanding her extreme anxiety to know something more about her future son, she did not like to speak a word on that subject to Satyavak, as he had strictly forbidden her. So with a cheerful face she begged pardon, and in a moment became thoroughly reconciled to him. Ever after that memorable night she continued his most faithful and affectionate wife.

Just as he had foretold, Satyavak had a boy in his sixtieth year. The child was very beautiful, and the parents named him Atirupa, and in his fifth year his father commenced the onerous task of educating him. After giving him a general training for some years he educated him in his own art of astrology, and of this Atirupa soon became a master; so much so that before he had completed his sixteenth year he was much ahead of his own father. So famous became Atirupa that people took a greater delight in consulting the son than the father about horoscopes and such things. Satyavak never grudged the honour that was thus being shown to his son. He was growing very old, and liked to be relieved of trouble in the decline of life. Thus as the son grew more and more famous, the father allowed himself to be eclipsed in reputation.

The same mode of life was continued by the family. At the tenth *ghatika* old Satyavak went out to beg, and returned with just enough rice to feed three.

One day the father went out as usual, and his old wife busied herself in getting things ready for the morning meal. Their son was meanwhile, sitting outside the house reading a chapter of the Brihatjataka, when suddenly there stood before him the king Setupati.

"Is your father at home?" asked the sovereign.

"No, my lord! He has just gone out. But I see from Your Majesty's face that some enemy has invaded your country, and you are come to consult my old father as to whether it would be advisable for Your Majesty to march against the invader. In other words, whether the attempt would be successful. I say 'no.' Saturn must now be in the eighth mansion of your horoscope, and so all your attempts must prove unsuccessful. You had better calmly retire into a forest with your family and children, and at the close of the third year from this date you may get back your kingdom without any direct attempt. There is no time to waste. The enemy, half a *ghatika* ago, entered the town by that East Gate. So run off."

Thus said the boy, and, before the king could open his lips, there came a hasty messenger panting for breath, and said:—"The enemy has entered by the East Gate. We are all undone. There was a most sudden and unexpected attack!"

The king ran in haste to look after his family, and just as he was hastening away, Satyavak returned, and his son related to him everything.

On hearing the story even the contented and philosophic disposition of Satyavak gave way. He placed his bowl on the verandah, and wept profusely. Never, in the whole course of his life before had he let fall a tear from his eyes but now they fell in profusion.

"Why do you weep, my most holy father ?" cried out the son.

This brought his mother running out of the house, and when she saw her lord in tears, even without knowing the cause, she began to weep out of sympathy. The son's eyes, too, began to moisten, and, thus, in a moment, all three began to weep without exactly knowing why. This continued for a time, till the mother, sobbing, said :—

"Why is the face of the donor of prosperity to the whole world wet with tears to-day ? Will my lord explain ?"

Said he :—" I bore with my misery calmly till to-day without disclosing it to you and making you a sharer in it ; but to-day's misfortunes have been too much for me! I could no longer bear it, and so I wept. Did I not tell you a long time ago that our son would be of no service to us in our old age ? That was a mild way of saying that his life would be a short one ! I did not like to wound a mother's heart with so terrible a statement. Only eighteen years are given to our Atirupa in his horoscope ; and, already, the sixteenth year is drawing to a close. He has only two years more to live, and then we shall lose him. The thought of this and of the vast amount of rare knowledge that he has acquired brought this sorrow upon me. What child of an astrologer has ever before, in his sixteenth year, so clearly foreseen the fortunes of the king

of the country ? Is it because the life of our Atirupa was made so short that God gave him such superior intellectual powers ? O ye gods, how cruel you are towards your own creatures !''

Thus ended the old man, unable to proceed further, and choking with his sorrow. His wife fell to the ground, like a tree cut at the root, and the boy perceived that he was the cause of all this misery of his parents. He consoled them by degrees, and cheered them up, asking his father for his horoscope. He then began to examine it minutely before his anxious parents, and at last pronounced it to have been wrongly cast, for certain reasons. His arguments were so cogent and persuasive that Satyavak, too, began to waver in his opinion. Atirupa, seizing the opportunity, clearly proved to his father that he would live for a full century ; that the horoscope must say so if it had been rightly cast ; and that all this trouble had occurred owing to its having been wrongly cast. He then corrected and re-wrote his horoscope with very sound arguments for such corrections, and made his father believe beyond doubt that his son was to live for a hundred years, and not to meet his death in his eighteenth year. His mother, too, was pretty nearly satisfied, and, in a few *ghatikas*, after a great deal of trouble on the part of Atirupa, peace was restored to the minds of his parents, and everything went on as usual.

Now this was all a trick of Atirupa. Finding that his parents were dispirited on his account, he had, for the nonce, invented a lie ; for the moment that Atirupa saw his horoscope he was more than convinced that death was inevitable in his eighteenth year. But, fresh from his

studies, and actuated with the motive of calming the feeling of his parents, he had boldly, by reason of his minute knowledge, brought forth arguments to falsify his horoscope, and his doting father, who had wavered in his belief, readily took in what he had said.

Although his parents fully believed in what Atirupa had said, he was ill at ease in his mind. He had really the greatest regard for his father, and extreme confidence in his predictions and statements. Knowledge is one for all. The same principles which had told Satyavak that Atirupa was not to live for more than eighteen years, indicated to his son also that his life current ran only up to that point.

His life, then, in the world, was only to be for two years more, but meanwhile he had a strong desire to perform a pilgrimage to Benares to perform the prescribed religious rites for his parents, and he knew very well that, if he spoke about it to his father, he would be the last person to give him permission. He hardly knew how to act, and, in order not to arouse any suspicions by doing things hastily, he waited for six months more, and spent that period most happily with his old and affectionate parents.

One day, as Atirupa was sitting in the verandah of the house, he thought to himself as follows:—"Ever since I expounded my horoscope, my old father believes that I shall live fully a hundred years. But I know for certain, if astrology is a science at all, that I shall die in a year and a half. Wherever I go this must happen. I cannot avoid it. If I remain at home and die here, my parents must also die broken-hearted, but if I run away from home they, who are

still under the illusion that I shall live for a hundred years, will anxiously await my return, and die a natural death. For I am certain that I shall soon depart to a place from which no one has ever returned. It is much better to put them to a little trouble and anxiety now and fly from home, than to stay behind and die in their presence, and thus be the cause of their death for grief for me. I shall not run away in vain either, for I shall proceed to Benares, and there before my end approaches, I shall have performed all the rites necessary for the salvation of my parents and myself."

Thus thought Atirupa and made up his mind to be off the next morning before dawn, and, as that was to be the last day in his life under his parents' roof, he was unusually cheerful. But instead of retiring to rest at the usual appointed time, Atirupa kept his father engaged in conversation to a late hour of the night. At length the aged couple retired to rest, and Atirupa did so, too, with tears in his eyes at the thought of the morrow's parting. But sleep he could not. He walked round and round the house; handled each palm-leaf volume on astrology, wept over it, and replaced it in its original position; went to the spot where his father used to take his seat while teaching his son; stood there for a short time and wept over it, and thus paid his last visit to every familiar part of his humble dwelling. When the night had almost drawn to a close—"Shall I run away or not?" thought Atirupa. Sometimes he thought it best to go, sometimes that he would stay at home and take his chance. At last the original resolve prevailed, and, packing up a small bundle of clothes and with nothing in hand, he left his home!

"The launch is always difficult and afterwards everything becomes smooth," runs the proverb. Even so Atirupa found it in his case. He who had had so much difficulty in quitting his home, found his mind soon made easy. The thought consoled him that in a year and a half he would be alive no more, while his parents would still be expecting his return, and be thus spending their days in less grief than if he had remained and died in their presence. He walked on as fast as he could. He begged his meals on his way, and without showing that he knew anything of astrology, lest he should give a clue as to where he had gone he went onwards like an ordinary beggar, walking all day and sleeping at night.

After travelling thus for nearly two months he reached the city of Chandragiri. Now Atirupa was from the south, and the people there did not understand his language, and though he begged in several places, no one would feed him. For the first time in his journey he found it difficult to live. "My difficulties have commenced in earnest now; God knows where they will end," thought he.

The day was almost drawing to a close, and our hero had not yet had his meal and rest. He wandered about the streets in the evening twilight, when a grand *pandal* met his eyes. The place had the appearance of marriage festivities, and he thought that if he went there he would be fed along with the rest, and he was not wrong in his expectation. It was the minister's house, and grand preparations were going on for the marriage of his son with the beautiful princess of Chandragiri. There were yet a couple of days before that happy event would take place; but the preparations had been going on for some weeks. The feasting

of poor Brahmans had also begun, and so Atirupa after some difficulty in explaining himself, discovered that the feeding would begin at the tenth *ghatika* of the night, and that until then he might rest where he liked. Constant walking had made him thoroughly weary, and, though he might lose his food, he did not like to lose the opportunity of testing his wearied limbs. Near the *pandal* there was a big mansion,—evidently belonging to a rich person. No one was outside the house, and it had a big verandah. Atirupa got on to this, and, retiring to a corner, coverd his body with his cloth and fell asleep. The night had just set in, and sleep soon overtook our hero.

Leaving him for a while to rest, let us return to his parents. They got up as usual, and missed their son. At first they thought that he must have gone out early that day to the river to bathe, and as he had not returned after the tenth *ghatika* they thought he must have gone to the adjacent village to see a friend. But even on the third day their son had not returned. Thus one day after another passed, and Atirupa never returned! As the days passed the anxiety of the parents became greater. They searched the whole country to the best of their ability, and obtained here and there slight hints that their son had gone on a pilgrimage to the holy Ganges, and that he would return in the course of three or four years. These hints had purposely been dropped on his way by the clever Atirupa and he had managed so well that he gave hope and yet no hope. So his aged parents, after a good deal of searching, gave up their pursuit as hopeless. Sometimes they thought that Atirupa had gone to the north on a pilgrimage; at other times that he had gone to some unknown place.

"I told you, wife, that we are so unfortunate in this world that our son would be of no service to us. First I thought that it meant his death, at the age of eighteen, according to my calculations. Atirupa cleverly proved this to be false, but what of that after all! He may live for a hundred years, but he has left us! Let him prosper somewhere or other happily. Enough if he returns before we die and consoles us. But I do not think that such happiness will ever occur to us."

Thus Satyavak continued to console his poor wife, and litte by little the pair ceased to sorrow for their lost son.

To return to Chandragiri, where we left our hero asleep. Chandragiri was governed by a king, who had a very beautiful and educated daughter. He searched for a suitable match for a long time, and, confiding in his minister, one day he called him to his side, and said :—

"My good minister, my daughter, the princess is growing older day by day, and still you have secured no suitable match for her. How long are we to be kept in anxiety?"

The minister replied :—"My lord! Give me leave for a month, and I will go down to the southern countries, and get you portraits of all the princes in that direction. Your Majesty can choose the most beautiful face from among them."

"Very well," said the king, and granted him leave. But the minister was a treacherous rogue, and never utilized his leave for any journey to the south. He spent the whole of it quietly in some distant corner of the king's

dominions, drawing from poor imagination half a dozen awkward pictures of several supposed princes of the south. On the expiry of his leave the minister produced these pictures and said :—

"My most gracious sovereign, with the nimble feet of a deer I have roamed over all the southern countries, and bring you these pictures. This picture represents the face of the Pandyan Prince, than whom no handsomer man ever existed in the south. That picture represents the Chera Yuvaraja. That one represents the Chola Prince."

"Throw them all away," said the king ,"I do not like even a single face from among them." How could he, when they had been purposely made awkward by the cunning minister ?

Again after one or two months the minister took leave for a journey to the north to fetch suitable bride-grooms, and this time, also, the same trick was played. Thus did the minister deceive the Chandragiri sovereign several times, till the old king was entirely disappointed, believing that all his minister had said was truth, and nothing but the truth.

Now, besides his daughter, the king had no child, and so, after her father, the whole kingdom of Chandragiri would devolve upon her ; and he who married her would become the King of Chandragiri. The minister of Chandragiri had a fair son, but he was not educated and his father determined to get him married to the princess, and thus place him on the throne. So he made the king think there was no prince, whom he could choose as a fit bride-groom for his only daughter; the king was lost in meditation, and did not know what to do. But one evening the

minister suddenly appeared with another picture in his hand, and with a joyful face.

"What! Have you, after all, succeeded in finding a suitable match?" asked the king.

"I think I have, my lord; but that is what I say every time that I approach Your Majesty. I cannot be certain of my success till Your Majesty has given your own opinion," answered the minister politely.

In his eagerness the king snatched the picture, and for the first time in his examination of pictures his face smiled, and he said, "Whose picture is this?"

The minister replied, "I will tell you, my lord; but are you, in any way, satisfied with it?"

"Most assuredly," said the king. "Tell me whose picture it is?"

"It is my son, my lord," replied the minister.

"Then," said the king, "we are like the old woman in the fable, who went in search of *ghi* when she had a great quantity of butter in her house. Why didn't you tell me that you had such a fair son? I would have gladly given him my daughter in marriage long ago, and saved you all the trouble of going now to the north, now to the south, and now to other directions."

The minister then explained that he did not like to be so selfish; that he had tried his best to find the best bridegroom; and that, when all his efforts proved vain, he had resolved to show to his master his own son's picture!

Now, the minister's son was, no doubt, fair but his father had purposely made the portrait more beautiful than the original, and at last his object was gained; for the king, not to lose any more time, at once fixed upon the fifteenth day of the approaching fortnight as the marriage day of his daughter. It was for this marriage that so many grand preparations were going on at Chandragiri when Atirupa arrived there, and it chanced that the place in which he slept was the minister's own house.

Every one in the town of Chandragiri was rejoicing at the approaching festivity except the minister. He had, it is true, after so many stratagems, succeeded in his great ambition, and the grand day was approaching fast. There were now only two days more, or rather two nights and one day,—for, on the morning of the third day, the happy marriage for which he had been working so hard was to come on, and still he was sad. For, alas! the day fixed for the wedding was that on which the epileptic fits, to which his son was liable, came upon him. The boy had epileptic attacks every alternate day, of a most virulent type. They began early in the morning, and lasted till late in the afternoon. Every other day the boy was in a most horrible plight from the fifth to the twentieth *ghatika* of the day. This was why his education had never been cared for. The minister, however, took such care, that no one in the town knew anything of his malady besides the inmates of his house, on whom he had imposed such strict penalties, should they reveal it, that no one ever dared to open his lips on the subject.

"Let the marriage rites pass off successfully, and then it does not matter much if the king finds out that my son is an epileptic," thought the minister.

But, unfortunately for him, the day fixed for the marriage was that on which the epileptic attack returned, and he did not know how to get over the difficulty. If he proposes a change of day it might lead to some suspicion or other, and the match might be broken off, and his highest ambition baulked.

After pondering the matter over in his mind for a few days he resolved upon celebrating the marriage on the day fixed.

"What if it is the day my boy is attacked? I shall not let him go through the marriage at all but some one disguised in his place. This person shall perform the rites in my son's stead, and thus the formal marriage will take place. I shall so arrange as to send away the substitute next day, and I shall amply reward the priests, who will be my tools in this affair. Even among them it is only a few that have seen my boy."

Thus thought the minister, and for a moment care fled from his face. He imagined that he had already successfully accomplished his object; when, suddenly, his face again changed colour, as he thought he had landed himself upon new difficulties.

"Where to find the substitute?" thought he. "First of all, he must be young and beautiful, and he must be a perfect stranger to this place, and he must be entirely at our mercy."

But how to find him and where? For the time was fast approaching! In this state of mind the minister came out of his house on the night on which our hero went to sleep on his verandah.

The minister was so ferocious a personage, that no one dared to approach him or speak to him when he was moody or occupied with his own thoughts. His servants knew him very well, and avoided him always on such occasions. So on the night in question, he was standing all alone in front of his house, near the tenth *ghatika*, just as people from several directions were walking to the dining-place behind the *pandal*, bent on feeding at another's expense. By and by the bustle of the hastening crowd calmed down, and eating commenced but the minister's mind still continued agitated. He still saw no hope of his getting out of his difficulties. This brought on such a feeling of disappointment over his mind, that he was almost weeping as he stood there alone. While thus lost in sorrow and misery, he thought he heard some one snoring in a corner of his long verandah.

"Who could it be, sleeping there so soundly? What must be the audacity of the fool, who had chosen *this* house to sleep in? But let me see. It may be a poor Brahman, who has lingered here for a meal and fallen asleep. I will awake him, and send him to the dining-hall."

Thus thinking, the minister slowly walked up to the spot. There was a light in the verandah, but the face of the sleeper was covered with a cloth.

"Ah, I see. It must be one of my servants, who has thus fallen asleep at his duty of watching the house. I have caught the wretch now and will dismiss him."

Thinking thus, the minister removed the cloth from the face. The exhausted Atirupa never stirred an inch. He slept on, and what did the minister see? A beautiful face, fairer than his own son's, and thus approaching almost the representation he had given to the king. Again, the age of the boy, who was asleep, was almost equal to that of his son. So perfect a duplicate was he, as the minister thought, of his own son, that he was charmed at the discovery. To crown his great success, the boy appeared to be a stranger to Chandragiri.

"Has fortune conducted me to this boy to-night?" thought the minister, and at once roused him from his sleep."

"Who are you, Sir?" asked the minister, and the boy did not reply.

"Do you know Telugu?" asked the minister.

The boy nodded his head to indicate that he did not know it.

"Sanskrit?" asked the lord of the house.

"Yes," said the boy.

The minister was overjoyed to find that the person was a perfect stranger, and, without wasting any time, the minister secretly took the boy inside, and told him that he would help him in every way, if he only promised to obey his orders. All that Atirupa wanted was a

sum of money large enough to enable him to continue his journey to Benares, and perform the intended ceremonies there. That the minister promised, and Atirupa was well fed and left to rest for the night.

Next morning the minister explained to him his plan, and asked Atirupa to take the place of his son and celebrate the marriage with the princess. But he must not reveal the secret to anyone, and as soon as the marriage was over he was to proceed on his journey to Benares, for which the minister would arrange and amply supply him with funds. Never again in his life was Atirupa ever to turn towards that direction. The arrangements were thus successfully made, and to the repeated questions of the minister as to his parentage, etc., Atirupa kept silent, and only gave out that he was a poor Brahman.

Thus, on his pilgrimage towards the north, our hero was detained for a day or two on account of a sham marriage! Refusal would only have endangered his head, for his keen sense told him that he was in the hands of the minister. And our hero also thought to himself:—

"Why should I chide prosperity that throws itself in my way? I am now a wandering beggar, travelling over strange countries, with not a *kaudi* in my hand. There is this minister, who promises to arrange conveniently for my journey, if I oblige him. In addition to my obliging him and getting myself obliged, there is another object attained by this my sham marriage. As long as I remain a bachelor I am debarred from celebrating certain ceremonies at Benares, Gaya, and other places. Fortunately, without my ever expecting it, my bachelorhood will also be

removed. I can, with full liberty, then perform all the rites at those holy places. So I am, in no way, a loser."

Atirupa thought thus, aud freely gave his consent to all the projects of the minister, and at last the marriage day came. Grand preparations went on over the whole town. A great *pandal* had already been erected between the minister's mansion and the royal palace, along which the bridegroom had to be conducted from his house, to the bride's house, where the rites were to be performed, and during the whole of that day the boy could not leave the girl's house. Agreeably to all these rules, Atirupa was cleverly transformed into the minister's son by being profusely decorated from head to foot, whereby only a portion of his face was visible. In this guise he was conducted to the marriage-hall in the royal palace. The princess, who was an intelligent and beautiful girl, was waiting with the greatest eagerness to get a secret glance at her future husband, and was delighted at heart to see that her chosen lord was fair to see and intelligent withal. The marriage ceremonies were gone through, and were very long, tedious and tiresome. Several oblations were offered to the sacred fire, and Atirupa performed them all. Every one there assembled thought him the minister's son, and one or two that knew the secret never opened their lips. They were not only largely bribed, but were threatened with the loss of their heads, if they broke their trust. Thus the marriage was celebrated, and the formal cord of the completion of the marriage ceremony was tied round the neck of the Princess by Atirupa—the supposed minister's son—towards the close of the day, amidst the beat of drums and sound of music. The remaining rites were

hastily gone through, and the auspicious hour for the entry into the decorated hall to spend the night was fast approaching.

This is a business left entirely to the management of the elder ladies of the household. Neither the priests nor the males of the household have any voice in it. As soon as the ladies appear they must retire from the scene, and according to this custom, and before the minister or the priest had any notice of it, the ladies walked in, and amidst their sweet songs and blessings conducted the newly married couple into the decorated hall. As soon as that was reached and the couple walked in, the queen, who was the mother of the bride, locked the door and carried away the key, as is the custom in Hindu society on the first day of the marriage.

Then alone in a spacious hall, decorated on all sides Atirupa had the fortune of meeting a princess! He flung his heavy ornaments down on the ground, and sat silent. The princess, vexed to see her lord so sad, placed before him all kinds of fruits, sweetmeats and other dishes that were in the hall.[1] On seeing them and tasting a little, Atirupa felt his hunger unappeased and sang a Sanskrit verse, the meaning of which the princess, though a highly educated lady, was not able to understand. The sweet voice and the majestic tone with which Atirupa had sung it delighted her, and so did the thought that her lord was no ordinary person and that he was as fair in mind as in body. She tried her best to arrive at the meaning, but could not.

[1] On the first day of the marriage and in the decorated hall meant for the couple to sleep in, all these eatables are left previously by the elder ladies of the house.

She fell at her lord's feet and requested him respectfully to expound the meaning of the verse he had just sung; and with a clear and silvery tone Atirupa began the exposition, and after two hours' commentary concluded it thus:—

"Sweetmeats, fruits, etc., to a hungry stomach are like beauty to unchaste women. Rice alone is the food I now most need to satisfy my hunger, as it is chastity alone which a woman needs to be called beautiful."

The princess rose up, and without saying a word arranged upside down on the floor in the form of a hearth, three silver cups, in which scented sandalwood, paste, rose-water and other things had been placed. There was *akshata*[1] in abundance standing in a platter at the side of the room. She took it, washed a portion of it in milk, which had been placed in the room, and, putting it in a silver milk jug with milk in it, set the pot over the overturned silver cups. Below these she placed scented sticks and sandalwood, which she found in the room, and in a minute lighted a fire. In less than a *ghatika* the washed *akshata* and the milk were cooked into boiled rice. The princess emptied the rice into a silver platter, and placed it before her lord. Atirupa was lost in admiration at the readiness of the princess. Glad at heart that he was fortunate enough to term that intelligent lady his wife, for a short time at least (for he was sure to be sent out of the city by the minister the next morning), he dragged the platter before him. He eyed the princess with joy in his face, and politely requested her to sit by his side and partake of the meal with him, as she, too, must be hungry.

[1] Rice grain mixed with turmeric used in auspicious ceremonies.

Now, during Hindu marriage ceremonies, the ritual takes up so much time, that brides and bridegrooms have scarcely any leisure for a convenient and hearty meal. The princess, proud of the company of such a beautiful and intelligent husband, sat by his side, but she ate little. She was so delighted with the verse that she requested her husband to repeat it again, and carefully copied it on the wall. After a long conversation about the various departments of knowledge with which each were acquainted, they retired to rest. Each was overjoyed, and thanked God, who, in his superior judgment, had brought them together in this world as husband and wife. Never was there a happier pair in the world than Atirupa and the princess.

Leaving our hero to his hard-earned repose after an adventurous day and night, let us return to the minister. Before he could arrange to substitute his son in the place of the poor Brahman boy, the ladies of the palace and Her Majesty the queen herself had out-witted him. He did not like to display any of his awkward blunders, and returned home a little sad no doubt, but glad that the marriage had gone off successfully, that throughout the whole ceremony the people assembled there thought that it was his son, who sat as the bridegroom, and that no suspicion had arisen on that head. He would fetch his supposed son in the early morning from the decorated chamber, and send the poor Brahman boy away:—"The secret will be between myself and that fool of a Brahman. From to-morrow my son will be the husband of the princess, and the heir-apparent to the throne of Chandragiri."

In this way the minister consoled himself, and before sun-rise sent his palanquin to the palace to bring home his

supposed son, the bridegroom. In accordance with custom the palanquin from the minister's mansion waited near the princess's bed chamber. The queen opened the door, and seeing her son-in-law enter the palanquin, she entered her daughter's chamber and conducted her to her own room. Now, though the happy couple had retired to rest the previous night, they had never a wink of sleep, for one conversation led to another, and each found the company of the other so sweet, that time flew away without their noticing it, till the palanquin was announced. To the credit of our hero be it said that he never told the princess that he was not the minister's son, nor did he give her any information about his parentage. He had, however, in a careless moment, let out that he was bent upon a pilgrimage to Benares. At the same time the princess never doubted her lord to be any other than the son of the minister. Thus, each trusted the other, and, expecting to open their hearts more freely the next time they met, they parted reluctantly in the morning.

The second day's rites must commence soon, and so the princess retired in haste to prepare herself for them, and expected to meet her lord, though not to speak with him, in the midst of an assembly.

Let us now follow our hero in the palanquin. As soon as it was set down, the minister conducted his supposed son Atirupa into his chamber, the doors of which were closed behind them. Our hero imagined for a moment that after all he was not destined to live to his eighteenth year, as the hand of some assassin could now put an end to his life : but it was not so. The fortune that gave him

the princess gave him also his life. The minister was the first to speak :—

"Poor wretch ! I meant to use you for my purpose only ; but circumstances have carrried you further than I intended. It is no blame of yours. Get into the same palanquin. I have left in it six bags, each containing 500 *mohars.* I have posted bearers on the way, and they will conduct you for two days and nights to the boundary of our empire. Take the coins with you, and fly to any country you like. If you turn back and place your feet in our dominions, your head shall be cut off. I have issued orders to this effect. I have a mind to do so now, but the thought that I had placed you for a day at least in the position of my son, softens my temper. Fly."

Atirupa was not allowed even a minute to reply. He was neither dissatisfied nor murmured. He was glad he was no more a bachelor, and as such had the full privilege of performing all the religious rites, prescribed by the sacred books of his religion, for his parents. There was the money promised for his expenses, and what more did he need ? If he was ever destined to live in the world he was sure that the lady, who had given him her company on the previous night, would still own him as her lord. While these thoughts were passing and repassing through his mind, the minister suddenly put him into the palanquin and gave the orders. The bearers, who had been previously instructed, started off on their journey. Without moving a muscle Atirupa sat in the palanquin, and continued his journey ; but now and then his mind flew back to the princess and her excellent accomplishment in everything.

While our hero was riding in a palanquin instead of walking on foot, the minister—glad at heart that the occasion, on which he would observe his son seated by the side of the princess, had at last come—conducted him joyfully to the sacred place. The priests had already assembled there, and began their preliminary rites. The princess was seated in a corner of the hall with her lady friends to give her lord her company in the oblations to the sacred fire. The beauty, the learning, the magnanimous conduct in everything of her lord was so prominent in her mind that she was pondering over all the conversation of the previous night.

Just at the fifth *ghatika* it was announced that the bridegroom was entering the marriage-hall. Every eye was turned towards him. Only one person there knew that it was a different person, who was now approaching the hall. The same dress, the same ornaments and decorations, the same stature, the same colour; but one in that hall knew that now her life was hopeless. With more than the curiosity of the rest, she, too, turned her eyes in the direction of her approaching lord, but her eyes failed to catch the intelligent face that had expounded, with such nicety, the intricate Sanskrit verse of the previous night. Her confusion and dismay were immense. But weakness might bring shame on her whole family;—might, perhaps, even endanger the very life of her real lord! So she resumed her composure and, going up to the minister's son, sat beside him, as she had done the previous day by the side of Atirupa. The rites proceeded, and she freely lent her help. The minister was highly elated at the thorough success of his tricks, and that he had won a princess for a daughter-in-law and an empire for his son.

Meanwhile the princess swore in her heart to be virtuous, if the great god would give her back her real husband. She sat now with a sham husband merely to preserve her family dignity. Her heart was not in the affair, and she would rather murder the substituted husband with her own hands than prove false to the true one. The second day also drew to a close, and, in accordance with the custom, in the early part of the night, the minister's son and the princess were conducted to the bridal-chamber and the door was locked. But now that the princess was alone with her sham husband her anger knew no bounds. She was the first to speak :—

"Stand there at the door, and don't stir one step and sully my room ! Tell me the honest truth, Who are you ? If you are a mean wretch, placed in this position by others, I shall pity and release you."

The minister's son replied :—" I am your husband."

Before he had closed his mouth she had unsheathed a sword, and at the very sight of it an epileptic fit began. Seeing the poor wretch in such a helpless plight she put the sword back into its sheath, and raised an alarm. The door was immediately opened.

"There, take away your son-in-law. He has got epilepsy," said the princess, standing at the remotest corner of the room to her mother.

Now no one knew the cause of this but the minister, who was still there, for the whole thing had happened so quickly that none of the party outside the hall had had time to go home. Cursing his fate, which had brought on the attack so quickly, the minister carried the bridegroom home.

"What is the matter, daughter?" said the queen.

"Mother, dear; if you wish me to live in this world, do not please, talk upon this subject till I tell you everything," replied the daughter.

There was now confusion and dismay throughout the palace, but still no one knew the cause of the strange occurrence on the second day of the marriage.

Still, the ceremonials could not be neglected, and those of the third day were continued. The princess and the minister's son again sat together in the hall, and, again entered the bed chamber:—the third time for the princess, the second time for the minister's son.

Said the princess to him just as the door was being shut:—"Fool that you are, that dare to approach again the bridal-chamber! I have allowed you admittance to-night, as I wanted to give you certain advice. Stand there in the place you stood last night, and hear what I have to say. You are not fit even to be the dust on my lord's feet. How did you dare, then, to assume this position? Tell me the whole truth, or you shall soon know the consequences of refusal!"

The minister's son, seeing that his life was in danger, and, giving up all hope of ever winning the princess for his wife, related, with fear and agitation, everything, except that about her real husband he could give the princess no more information than that he was a poor Brahman boy, picked up for the occasion by the minister, and that he had been safely conducted out of the Chandragiri dominions by the orders of his father.

This news gave the greatest consolation to the princess. She was glad to hear that her lord was still alive, and that there was no fear for his life for the present. So great a soul would, of course, prosper wherever he might go.

Then, turning to the minister's son, she said:—"Never again, set your feet in my room. You may attend my father's court as the king's son-in-law, and receive the customary presents, and do all that you like as regards the outer world. But if you ever dare to call me your wife, or approach my room, or write to me, or send messengers to me, I'll have you beaten to death!"

The minister's son received the order, and called to his father, who was waiting outside, for fear that something might happen that night also. The door was soon opened, and the minister's son left that chamber for ever.

Ever after that day, the princess kept to her own room, and only came out for meals. That her real lord should return and claim her was her one desire. To her he was everything, Her parents observed the great change that had come over her. She gave up her usual ornaments and decorations, and clad herself in the meanest of her attires. She renounced flowers and scents, which had been her special taste. She had always slept on the softest of silken cushions, but now curled herself up on the bare ground when sleep overpowered her. Regular sleep she had none, and she always awoke with a start. She who had always dwelt in summer-houses made cool by a thousand and one artifices, now took her seat between five sacrificial fires *(Panchagni)*,

and did penance. To no one did she explain the mystery of her sorrow, and no one dared to ask her, for so great was the awe she was held in by all, even by her very parents.

The minister's son was so much ashamed of the treatment he had received from the princess, that he never opened his mouth about it to any one. He often frequented the palace as the king's son-in-law, and had due regard paid to him on that account, but even to his father he never said a word, notwithstanding repeated questions, threats and solicitations; and in this way days and months and years passed.

The object of the princess's penance was to regain her original lord, but no one except herself knew of this. Meanwhile the minister's son, as the royal son-in-law, received due honours and presents,and as he was a fair boy, and no one knew the secret of his disease, all expected that, sooner or later, the husband and wife would be reconciled. No one, however, dared to suggest a reconciliation and as to the minister's son, the very name of the princess sometimes brought on the fear of the unsheathed sword, and a visit of his disease. So he never dared to approach her, and, at the slightest hint that she was moving at a distance, he would glide away unobserved. He was content to be called the son-in-law of His Majesty, and his father the minister, too, was glad, in a way, that some day or other the empire of Chandragiri would devolve upon his son.

Thus, a full year and a couple of months passed, and the princess was still engaged in her severe penance. Her

life was so pure, so chaste and so simple, that no one had the heart to stay her. But, one day, her old father said :—

"My dearest daughter, you are my only child ; I had a great desire to see you, in my old age, married and happy with a husband. But ever since your wedding day you have become thoroughly changed. Is this ascetic's life the life which a princess should lead ? Speak out, my dear, and let me know the misery that so affects you."

Replied the princess :— "My most noble father; all that I do now is for the good of my husband. Don't ask me any more questions, till I tell you everything after my desires are accomplished. Till then leave me to myself. I may soon want some money, and please let me have it."

The determined air with which the princess spoke, her simple and innocent look, and the pleasure with which she evidently led her ascetic life for the time being, kept the king dumb, and he ordered his treasurer to give the princess whatever she required. She now began to order travellers' rest-houses to be erected at every ten *kos* from her city to Benares, and put servants in each with instructions to entertain the pilgrims that might pass and repass to and from Benares. Every convenience of the pilgrims was to be attended to.

Meanwhile, as soon as Atirupa had reached the borders of the Chandragiri dominions, he got down from the palanquin, thanked the bearers for not having murdered him on the way, took possession of the wealth the minister had left, and proceeded towards Benares. Now that he was

amply provided with funds, he found his journey very convenient, and reached that holy city in a couple of months. As he was sure of never living beyond his eighteenth year, he never thought again of his wife, the princess. What hope was there in him of his ever regaining her? The minister's plans he knew well enough, and the care with which he watched for him he could well imagine! So Atirupa never looked back upon Chandragiri, nor did he ever think of returning back.

He spent a few months at Benares in performing the holy rites, and then proceeded to Prayaga. Here our hero went to an old woman, and, giving her all the money he had on hand, requested her to regard him as her own son, and feed him. She was a god-natured dame, and treated Atirupa very kindly. In order not to be idle he let his knowledge of astrology be known, and thousands flocked to him to profit by his art. So our hero thus led a good life, performing rites, distributing his knowledge, and engaged in devotion. The close of his eighteenth year was now fast approaching. The thought made him sad, but he always kept the secret to himself. Even to the kind old lady, who every day became more and more attached to him, he never said a word about it. As his end drew nearer he avoided public paths, and proceeded to the Ganges for his bath by a lonely footpath through an unfrequented jungle. He adopted this precaution so that people might not observe him at the time of his death. All this time, at Chandragiri, the princess was still at her penance, and his poor parents, at Setupati's capital, were anxiously expecting the return of their son.

At last the fatal day arrived, and while Atirupa, after his morning bath, was returning home by his lonely path to his adopted mother, his foot slipped while going up a step, made slippery by some rain that had fallen, and he fell down dead! His body lay unnoticed, for very few people passed by that lonely path.

Now, the moment of Atirupa's death was exactly the moment when the princess's austerity and penance fructified. The god Mahesa appeared before her, and requested to know the object of her austere devotions.

"O most holy god," said she, falling at his feet; "I want to gain back my husband."

"We have granted this boon to you, overcome by your sincere devotion; your lord will soon return back to you," said Mahesa, and disappeared.

From that moment the princess's face changed, and for the first time, since that fatal second day of her marriage, when she missed her husband's face, she felt happy.

"Mahesa has granted my boon; my noble husband will return to me soon now. Let it be days, weeks, months, or years! I shall wait patiently," thought she. But though this thought consoled her greatly, still she did not care to show to others that she was happy, so long as her husband's whereabouts remained unknown. Meanwhile, she issued strict orders to the several agents in her rest-houses between Benares and Chandragiri, that every pilgrim, who passed or repassed that way, was to be carefully entertained and attended to.

Meanwhile, the old woman at Prayaga missed Atirupa, and did not know how to account for it.

"Our boy has never been irregular, even for a single day, since he came to live with me. Perhaps he has gone out somewhere to-day."

Thus thought she till noon came, and still Atirupa did not return. She then went here and there, but all her search was in vain. That whole day passed away. Night came on.

"Atirupa was always shy. Who will feed him to-night! Will he have enough to eat?" thought she.

On the second day the old woman's anxiety increased, but what could she do? All her search proved useless.

Now, after thus conferring the boon upon the princess Mahesvara returned to his place in the heavens, and the sage Narada came to visit him. On meeting the god, he asked him as to what the news was. Mahesa told of the boon he had granted to the princess.

"Her husband is Atirupa, who has died at Prayaga this morning. We fixed his life at eighteen years, and his term was over this morning. How will he return to the princess?" said the sage.

Then the great god saw the mistake he had committed but, as he had power to alter things, he said:—

"Our word to the princess shall never prove untrue. Her austerities, also, must never remain unrewarded. If Atirupa is already dead, let him remain so for three days only. Let him regain his life on the fourth day, and let this mystery be unknown even to himself."

Thus said Mahesa, and cleared himself from a world of confusion!!

Just as the great god had said, Atirupa came back to life on the fourth day after his death. He did not know what day it was, and rose up as one rising from a deep slumber. His cloths were all miry, and his body dirty, with the accumulated dirt of several days. He did not know what could have occurred to him. He only had a hazy recollection that the fatal day had come and passed away, and that he had fallen down in the struggles of death. Everything was an enigma. He rose up, went again to the river, bathed and dried his clothes, and, like a madman, returned slowly to his house without understanding what had happened. The good woman, as she welcomed him said:—

"Where have you been to, my good boy, for the last three days? We all missed you, and all my search after you was in vain!"

It now became perfectly clear to Atirupa that he must have been asleep on the path for the days;—or was it a three days' death? The fatal day had anyhow come and passed away, and whether it was sleep or death that had come to him he did not care to puzzle his head about. He invented an excuse for the occasion, and lived under that good dame's kind roof for a few days more, being now of one thing prefectly certain, that the fatal day had passed away, and that he was to live for many more years in the world.

The main object that now stood before him, was the misery which his poor old parents must be in. He had spent nearly two years from them. He had had good reason to fly from them, and now, he thought, he had equally good reason to return.

"Are they likely to be still living? Shall I ever have the happiness of meeting them again? If once I can rejoin them, never more will I quit my happy home. I will go and beg a thousand pardons from my father, who, I am sure, will readily grant them."

With his mind thus made up, he spoke to the kind old lady about his intended departure. Though exceedingly sorry to lose him, she allowed him his wish to return to his home, and gave back to him all that he had given her, saying that she had been already rewarded by his good acts and kindness towards her. Our hero received his money back, as he would much need it on his journey, and requested the old lady to come to him, as soon as she heard from him. He would have taken her along with him, but he wanted to know first whether his parents were alive. Hiding the money in his rags, like a true pilgrim from Benares, he now took the road, and, with the sacred water of the holy Ganges on his shoulders, bent his way homewards.

Now every step that he took on his way homewards, conducted him unawares to his wife. At the very first rest-house an officer of the princess entertained him sumptuously, and when he was about to resume his journey, put a palm-leaf manuscript in his hand, and asked him if he could read it and explain the meaning of what was written. Atirupa received it, glanced over it, and at once his face changed colour. Checking himself he thus replied:—

"I know the meaning of it; but I cannot tell you what I know. Permit me please to depart."

As soon as this was said, the master of the rest-house rose up and fell at the pilgrim's feet, and requested him to stay awhile, as his journey was not to be on foot any longer. Atirupa was astonished.

"Am I dreaming, or is this reality ? " thought he. "What is the meaning of all this ? This is the verse that I recited to the princess of Chandragiri on my way here. Is this a trick to find me out ? Am I likely to see her again ?"

While he was thus musing, the words,—"The palanquin is ready : will your holiness be pleased to go into it ?" —fell upon his ears. It was the master of the rest-house who had thus spoken to him.

"What is the meaning of this ? Why should a poor pilgrim returning home to his country ride in a palanquin ?" asked Atirupa.

Then the master of the rest-house explained to our astonished hero the charity of the princess of Chandragiri, who had raised one thousand and one choultries on the way between Benares and her town, with instructions to feed and entertain every pilgrim, to give to every pilgrim the manuscript he had just seen, to request him to explain the meaning, and to conduct to her that person, who could read it and explain its meaning. He further told the still astonished Atirupa that several months had passed, that many had received and returned the manuscript unread, and that the only person, who had given him any hope, was the present pilgrim.

Everything was now plain to our hero : the verse was his own which he had repeated to his wife on the night he saw her : her name was connected with the

charities. What more proof could he need? He was now perfectly sure that all these contrivances where his wife's plans to bring him back to her. He thanked God for his good fortune, and was sure that he was to be taken back to his wife's country. But what could have become of the minister's son? He did not like to enquire about this, lest it should lead him into danger.

Meanwhile, in accordance with instructions received, the messengers flew to the princess with the news that, at last, a pilgrim was coming in a palanquin, who was able to expound the writing on the palm-leaf. The princess's joy knew no bounds. Mahesa's boon has been granted after all, and yet she was not quite sure till she actually saw her lord. She sent for her father, and he, ever ready to obey his virtuous daughter, came at once.

"Most loving father. I have attained the object of my penance, and we have to wait only for a couple of days more. There is a pilgrim coming here from Benares the day after to-morrow, who must be entertained in our palace and perform his *puja* in our great hall, and after receiving blessings from his holy hands I shall be rejoined to my husband. Let all the great men of the city attend the *puja* to bless me on the occasion. Let my husband, too, be invited. But you must not give notice of this, until we see the pilgrim actually settled in his *puja* in our palace. There will still be ample time. Meanwhile you should yourself go on in advance and welcome the pilgrim, and conduct him to our hall. He is no ordinary personage. I will explain everything to you after his arrival."

Thus spoke the daughter, and her father had no other course but to obey. She was his only daughter, and had brought him the happiest of news. So he hastened out, and proceeded to welcome the approaching pilgrim. The palanquin was placed on the ground as soon as the bearers saw the king, and notice was given to the rider inside that the lord of Chandragiri was approaching. The old king himself, too, when he was informed that the palanquin had been put down, got down from his vehicle and proceeded on foot to welcome the pilgrim. And for the first time in their lives the father-in-law and son-in-law saw each other face to face without the former knowing the relationship that existed between them. He was lost in admiration. The beauty, the noble bearing, and the holy appearance of the pilgrim were enough for any man to bow to. The monarch, also, on putting the ascetic life of his own daughter and the approaching pilgrim together, thought that there must be some spiritual relationship between them, or that the pilgrim was a real god in human form, and showed him the greatest respect.

The pilgrim did not like to commit himself by saying anything till he was sure that it was his wife who was at the bottom of all these adventures. There was, therefore, more silence than talk after the meeting, and the little there was of talk was so neutral that it cleared none of the doubts of either party.

Chandragiri was reached at last, and the pilgrim with the holy Ganges water safely in his hand alighted at the royal mansion, and the vessel containing it was placed in the hall. As soon as the palanquin was announced the

princess took up a convenient position in her balcony to observe her lord, and when her eyes roamed over him she breathed deep for joy.

" May Mahesvara be praised! He has brought me back my *natha*— my true lord!" thought she. "I shall never again lose him now."

From that very moment everything about her and in her began to change. She decorated herself with her choicest ornaments and put on the best of her apparel, and, while the pilgrim was engaged in his ablutions, came down herself from the upper storey, and decorated the hall with her own fair hands for the performance of the *puja*. Every one noticed the sudden change that came over the princess, and took it to be her joy at the approaching reunion with her husband the minister's son.

The time for the worship of the holy water of the Ganges drew on, and almost all the great people of the city were assembled for it. The holy water of the Ganges was not a thing to be had daily ; so they were fully sensible of the grandeur of this occasion.[1]

The minister and his son, too, were in the assemly, and as the son-in-law of the king, the son had taken a prominent seat. His father was seated near him overjoyed at heart that, after all, the princess was compelled by time to choose to be reconciled to his boy. The ceremonies over, every one stood up with outspread palms to receive the holy water and our hero opened the vessel

1 This is a ceremony in which worship is performed to the vessel containing the holy water of the Ganges, after which the Ganges water itself is distributed to the people assembled from the vessel containing it.

containing it and holding it in his left hand proceeded to distribute the contents with a small spoon (*uddharini*) in his right hand.

"Shall I assist you, my dearest husband, in carrying that water ? I am bound to do so on this occasion by the rules," cried out a female voice and suddenly the princess stood by the left side of our hero with her hand on the holy vessel.

"What ! what !" cried the king.

"I am the wife of this pilgrim ! Let the minister be secured at once," was the reply.

The minister was soon so bound that he could not escape, and all the assembly stood in wonder, astounded and astonished. There was no time to be lost now, and the princess explained in detail the whole mystery to the listening crowd : how she had been married to Atirupa; the Sanskrit verse; the substitution of the minister's son in his place; the disappearance of her true lord; the commencement of her misery ; her penance and plans to discover the lost husband ; and her success. She had carefully preserved the cups and the platter, in which she had served the food on the first night to her husband and produced them now in proof. The minister confessed his guilt, and his son attested the truth of the princess's statements as far as he knew it.

Thus everything became plain, and Atirupa, by his good fortune, regained his life and his lost wife, the former by the latter, though he never knew it.

The minister was committed to the stake, and his son given leave to go to his house and never more to approach the palace. The marriage of Atirupa with the princess

was again celebrated with all due grandeur, and he succeeded to the throne of Chandragiri as Yuvaraja. He did not forget his parents in the time of his prosperity, nor the old lady at Prayaga. He proceeded in a royal progress to the south, met his parents, assured them that he was their son, explained to them his whole history from the day of his separation, and brought them to Chandragiri to live in his palace. The aged couple were delighted to have found their child after all, and lived in prosperity.

A word as to the prophecy of the boy astrologer to the Setupati. That king and his wife and children hid themselves in a wood adjacent to his capital. It was now two years ago since the son of Satyavak had assured him that, without trying for it he would, after a certain period, get back his lost kingdom, and that prophecy was now fulfilled.

Chandragiri was the empire of which the kingdom of the Setupatis was a petty tributary state, and because the Setupati had failed to send in his tribute regularly, his dominions had been invaded and he had had to fly for his life. The boy astrologer was now himself the emperor, and he, out of kindness to his old king, gave him back his state. Thus was the prophecy duly fulfilled by the astrologer who had made it, and, as Emperor of Chandragiri, Atirupa reigned over his vast empire for many a long year in peace and prosperity.

XXXVIII

THE TALISMAN OF CHASTITY

In the land of Akhandakaveri there reigned a king, named Viradeva. He had an only daughter, named Ambika. She was his only hope, and so he brought her up very tenderly. Nor was her education neglected on that account, as is usually the case with spoilt children. She was put to school at a very tender age, and was very carefully educated. Every day she rose up early from her bed and devoted her whole time to her studies. It was a very hard routine that she had to undergo, attending upon various teachers and receiving instruction from them, for they were numerous. Indeed, there was a professor employed for each of the sixty-four departments of knowledge–*chatus shashtikalas*. So ardent was her desire to acquire knowledge,–so great was her thirst for it, that she drank deep at the fountain, and before she attained to mature age she became a great *pandita*. Of all the sixty-four teachers presiding over her tuition, there was one whom she specially venerated, for he deserved it. To him she gave the best of her love. He had instructed her the most, and rightly deserved the extreme veneration in which he was held by his royal student.

When Ambika had almost completed her education, it was time for her to retire from the company of her much venerated masters, and shut herself up in the closely guarded rooms of her palace, as became a royal maiden. She, therefore, proceeded to the house of each of her teachers to take leave of them in person. Everywhere

she found a ready welcome. The usual presents were exchanged; advice was freely given; and the parting was so joyous and pleasant. Then, after taking leave of her minor teachers, she reached the house of the great master whom she held in such veneration. When the usual presents were placed before him, he said :—

"My dear Ambika, it was not for these presents and flimsy nothings that I took so much care of you. My fee is an embrace from you, not now, but, on the first day of your nuptials with your lawful husband, whoever he may be. On that busy day, when the festivities are over, and when you are ready to enter your lord's rooms, you must take leave of him for a short time and visit me in this house with all your nuptial decorations and allow me to embrace you first. This is the fee I demand for all my trouble on account of your education, and no other fee will I accept."

Thus spoke the master, and Ambika nodded assent to his demand, for she was so mad in her veneration for his learning that she overlooked his moral character. She perceived his meanness and depravity, as in reality she had strong ideas on morality and chastity; but her childish veneration for the man made her consent, and she promised to visit him on her wedding day as ordered. Without any ill-will towards him she returned home, and thence remained shut up according to the custom of the country, expecting her wedding.

A princess, so learned and so beautiful, could not have long to wait for marriage. The prince of the Pandyas soon sought her hand, and, as usual, the marriage was celebrated in the capital of Akhandakaveri. Great were

the preparations. Grand were the ceremonies. The busy day was drawing to a close. The night had set in. The preparations for ushering in the bride and bridegroom were gone through; but, as Ambika was just on the point of entering her lord's room, she made some signs to her mother, as if she wanted to retire for five or ten minutes for some urgent reason.

The princess thereupon disappeared in the twinkling of an eye, and vanished like lightning among the clouds. She had already planned a secret way for her escape, and for the faithful execution of her promise to her master. All this she had done for herself. No second soul knew anything about it. With the rapidity of lightning she flew to her master's house and knocked at his door, and he knowing well, that it was the day of the princess's marriage, was all agog to test Ambika's faithfulness. At the first knock he came out suddenly and opened the door, and, in reality to his amazement found the princess standing in all her wedding attire before him. Now, this man was the noblest of human beings and had all along perceived that Ambika had the greatest regard for a promise. His indecent demand was merely a strong test to examine her. He bowed himself at her feet, and, instead of meeting a tutor come to ravish her and make her life a burden to her, she heard a voice from the ground :—

" My noble Ambika, never hereafter take me for a vile brute. My demand was only made to test your power of keeping a promise. Return home at once, and repose happily by the side of your husband. Till now you were my daughter by the rules of tutorship. From this night you are my mother."

Thus said the master, and showering his blessings on her, requested her to return in haste to the palace. Ambika, overjoyed and extremely pleased at heart at her adventure and her unsullied reputation, returned as quickly as she had left. But for all that, the time had been longer than she had expected, and her beating heart and profuse perspiration roused the suspicions of her husband. And, as usual, with young princes, he suspected her chastity at once. At their very first meeting there was a quarrel.

"Where did you go for so long?" asked he.

"Only to the back of the palace," said Ambika.

"So!" said the husband. "Till I have more confidence in your chastity, I shall not sleep by your side. Sleep in a distant cot. Never approach me," roared the enraged prince.

"My lord! I am as chaste as pure milk. I have never known any one till now. If it is my fate that I should be thus suspected, I shall bear it without any murmur and wait for your lordship's pleasure to regain your confidence. I agree to your lordship's hard condition," replied Ambika, and calmly waited upon her husband.

The prince was unbendable. His suspicion was very strong, and it was not easily to be overcome. All Ambika's explanations were in vain. But she did not utter a syllable about her promise to her tutor, dwelling only upon her purity of conduct. There was no other place to go to; so she had to sleep apart from her husband in the same room. Thus the first night passed away; and so the

second, and third—a week—a month. Every night the prince and princess retired to their bed chamber, and slept on different beds. To the outer world they seemed very loving and affectionate to each other ; but in their hearts they knew their extreme misery.

When the first month was over the prince requested his father-in-law to permit him to return to Pandiyadesa with his wife.

The lord of Akhandakaveri readily gave his consent, and sent off his son-in-law and Ambika with suitable presents and other things becoming to the occasion, and himself accompanied the prince and his daughter for three days on their journey to Pandiyadesa. Then the father-in-law took his leave, and bent his way back to his kingdom. The prince and Ambika, after a journey of a few more days, reached his home, and the old king gave them a suitable welcome, and all the usual festivities were conducted at Madura, the capital of the Pandiyas. Here, too, no one knew of the difference that existed between the prince and his newly married wife. Every one took them to be the happiest of newly married pairs. They slept in the same room, though not in the same cot, regularly for two full months.

During this long interval of three months and more, the prince had been closely watching Ambika. The more he tested her, the more the force of his suspicions began to decline. Her patient conduct, her close application to her books, her profound learning and deep experience, her most correct behaviour towards himself, notwithstanding his unkindness towards her, the unabated affection she

showed him, and a thousand other little matters came before him to upbraid him for his brutal conduct towards her, till, one night, he spoke to her thus :—

"Ambika, will you, now at least, tell me the truth? Tell me plainly that you are not unchaste. Whatever may have been your previous course of life, I shall gladly excuse you. Be true now, and utter no lie."

Replied Ambika :—" My most noble lord, I have not till now known any person. It is very unkind of you to harbour such suspicions of me. I am as chaste as chastity itself."

Said the prince :—" You are chaste because I watch you so carefully. Who knows what you may be if you are left to yourself?"

Said Ambika :—" If this idea had been lingering in your mind, why did you not, my lord, mention it long ago to me? You may leave me here and disappear for any period of time you like. I shall never think of any being in this world but yourself. I shall ever continue to be your loyal wife, however hardly you may behave to me."

Said the prince :—" What guarantee is there to me that you will always continue chaste? Give me some proof by which I may know, wherever I may be, that you are chaste."

" Agreed," said the wife, and took out from her box a garland of lotuses. " This is the test of my chastity. This was given to me by my mother as soon as I came to understand. The moment the flowers fade you know must

my chastily is lost, and that as long as these flowers retain their freshness I am chaste. You can take it with you, and roam over the whole world with a calm mind, never harbouring any anxiety as to my conduct; for when you perceive the colour and freshness of these flowers to fade, you will know that I will have lost my reputation."

The husband took the garland, for had his wife told as untruth and said that she was impure, he would have easily forgiven her. But her denial increased his suspicions and he intended to try his best to test her: to regain her with increased love if she withstood the trial: to banish her for all her assumed goodness if she was really bad. With these thoughts in his mind the prince said to her:

"You seem to be a more and more curious woman every time I examine you. Do you practise magic to deceive people? What! These are merely ordinary lotuses, and if they are fresh now, they will fade to-morrow."

"Keep them, my lord, for some days before you judge of them. As for your statement, I swear by everything that I hold sacred that I know of no magic, except the magic of being chaste and obedient to my husband, and I have confidence that that magic will one day remove all your doubts and make you love me all the more for your doubts now," said Ambika.

The husband knew not what to say; so he took the garland and locked it up in his box. He kept it with him for some days in Madura, and every morning when he left his bed he examined it, and to his surprise, which daily increased, he found it unchanged in colour and freshness. He now resolved upon a plan to put his wife under the severest conditions for testing her fidelity and thus spoke to her:

"My Ambika ! you must leave this roof to-morrow. I intend sending you to the east end of this town to a ruined choultry, with your maid servant to take care of you. They will bring you every morning from the palace two measures of rice with other necessaries to live upon. You must live there, while I go on a pilgrimage to Benares to wash away my sins for having married an unchaste wife. With your own money and I do not know how you will get it—you must build a Siva temple opposite to the choultry, must become pregnant of a son through me and unknown to myself, before my return to this city. I shall be absent for two years. Till you perform successfully all these conditions, I shall never call you my wife, nor imagine you to be chaste."

"Agreed," said Ambika. "I am sure that my chastity will successfully help me in all these undertakings.[1] With the talisman of my chastity in your hands you can go wherever you like. I shall contrive to live in the humble house selected for me by my lord as happily as in this palace. It is the mind that makes the house happy."

Thus said Ambika, without in the least fearing her change of dwelling. Her husband admired her perseverance, but firmly made up his mind to put her to this most severe test. With his mind thus made up, he approached his father next morning, and disclosed to him the secret

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[1] *Cf.* Milton's *Comus* (420—437) :—
'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity :
She that has that is clad in complete steel.
* * *
No goblin, or swart faery of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.

about his wife's conduct, which he had till then kept to himself. He never told the old man a word about the talisman, nor his conditions to his wife, but proposed a pilgrimage to Benares with the double object of forgetting his past miseries and of searching for a better wife. The father tried his best to dissuade his son from his project.

"Remain at home, and I shall find you a better wife," said he.

But the son was already resolved. He sent Ambika that very morning to the choultry with four maid-servants to attend upon her, and every morning one of them had to come to the palace to receive the dole of rice.

Ambika bravely faced her new life, hopeful of successfully performing all her husband's conditions; but for a time she was wholly at a loss as to how to do it. She was now very miserable,—an out-cast of womankind, a suspected woman,—living on the charity of the prince. So the outer world took her to be. She had neither money, nor friends, nor influence and she feared that she might be closely watched without in the least knowing it.

As for the prince, the greater the distance he travelled the more his heart turned back to his wife, for the talisman, which he daily examined, indicated his wife's chastity. Now and then a strong desire came over him to turn back and embrace his loyal and faithful wife; but at other times a headstrong stupidity to see how his wife would execute his hard conditions impelled him on his course. Thus he travelled for a month and reached Vijayanagara.

The King of Vijayanagara was a bad man. His pride was in having many wives, and his motto was that no woman in the world was chaste. The Pandiya prince reached the Court, and in a conversation about the chastity of the women of different parts of India, dwelt at length on the fidelity of his wife, and produced the talisman as a proof of it. The King of Vijayanagara called him a great fool for putting so much trust in womankind, and promised to send one of his ministers to Madura to ruin the woman he extolled so much, and whose talisman he possessed.

"Agreed," said the prince; and a minister was at once despatched to Madura.

Now he was one of the most depraved of human beings, whose sole object of life was to gain the favour of his master by doing his dirty work for him. He attired himself like a vendor of pearls and precious stones, and with a good quantity of these articles proceeded to Madura, which he reached soon. He took up his abode in the eastern quarter, and in a small house he opened his shop for vending gems and pearls. Crowds began to collect, and these goods which are very valuable, were purchased now and then by a few rich people in the place. The news spread throughout the town that a merchant with a fine stock had arrived from the north, and that he was exposing good stuff for sale. Few bought, for the articles were of high value, but the whole town congregated there to see the fine goods.

About a month after the arrival of the merchant, the people ceased to pour into the shop to take a look

at the goods, and only those who really wanted to purchase went there. So on a certain day, when there was no one there except Devi, a maid-servant of Ambika, who had come out of curiosity, the pretended merchant thus spoke to her :—

"Good woman, may I know wh o you are ?"

She replied :—"I am a poor woman, servant to the princess of Akhandakaveri, who is undergoing punishment."

"Who is this princess ? What is her story ? Why is she undergoing punishment ?" the merchant asked, as if he knew nothing about her.

The maid-servant related what little she knew, but all she knew was that Ambika was suspected, and that her husband, the prince, was punishing her for unfaithfulness. When he had heard all she had to say the merchant, as if a new thought had dawned upon his mind, thus replied :—

"Then it is already established that her character is bad. If you but aid me in seeing her for a night, I shall in return make over to you, or to her, my whole property. That may also relieve you from your present miseries. Nothing will be lost thereby. The reputation of the princess is already tainted."

The maid-servant did not know what reply to make. But the merchant, by his winning conversation, soon made her agree to talk upon the subject to the princess ; and with this mission she went way. At first she did not know what to do. How to open the subject was the great difficulty she felt but, she was somewhat emboldened by

the thoughts that Ambika was already a suspected character. At last she told her everything.

Ambika listened to what the maid-servant had to say very attentively, and, taking her into her confidence, related to her in detail every part of her miserable life—her pure unsullied character, the cruelty of her husband, the vow, and so on.

Ambika then continued :—"My kind Devi, from to-day you must lend me all your help to enable me to fulfil my vows, for to-day I make you the chief of my maid-servants. To secure us funds for the raising of the Siva temple, the suggestion of the pearl merchant has provided us with means. He wants to sleep with a princess. Let him have his wish, and let my character still remain unimpaired. What if we decorate one of the maid-servants in all my ornaments and pass her off for me for a night? I can easily wear her clothes for a night. By doing thus, the pearl merchant will be duped, the funds required will be secured, and my character will remain unsullied. So run you to the merchant and tell him that he shall have his desire fulfilled this very night."

Devi pitied Ambika for all she had related to her, and, resolving within herself to do her best to assist the poor princess, at once arranged everything with one of her co-servants and ran to the pearl merchant. He was delighted to hear that matters were settled so easily, and was full of hope that he would the next day carry the news to Vijayanagara as to how pure a princess Ambika was; so he hastened that very night to Ambika's quarters. He spent the night with a maid-servant in the belief

that the woman he slept with was the princess, and the next morning quite in keeping with his promise, he made over to Devi all the wealth he had with him, in return for her assistance, and left Madura. He journeyed for a fortnight, and reached Vijayanagara, informed his monarch that his mission was successfully accomplished, and the princess was no better than other women. In proof he shwed, one or two ornaments of the princess, which he had carefully brought with him. They were, no doubt, the ornaments of the princess, which the maid-servant had worn on the night on which she slept with the emissary. These proofs were quite enough to convince the Pandiyan prince that his wife was of a bad character. He had all along entertained that kind of doubt about her, though now and then there were circumstances, which made him waver in his opinion. The minister's mission and the supposed successful execution of it, made the husband think that he was all along wrong in having now and then entertained a better and higher idea of the Akhandakaveri princess. He looked at his talisman, and not a petal had faded. The King of Vijayanagara called it magic, and the trophy, which the minister had brought with him, in the shape of the ornaments of the princess, in token of his having spent a night with her, made the enraged husband think that the talisman was magical, that his wife was a bad woman, and that there was no use in testing her conduct any longer.

"Shall I go back and have her killed for her crime ?" thought he within himself. But he did not like to be so very hasty, and as the princess was his wife only in name, he did not much care what life she led.

"She is already proclaimed by me to be a bad woman, and deservingly has been placed in a disgraceful corner of the town. If she had established her conduct to be above suspicion, I would have her taken back to myself; but now she has forfeited all chance of ever returning to me as my wife. Why should I, therefore, care any more for her? Why should I curtail my pleasures in travelling over several countries to visit Benares?"

Thus thought he within himself, and though the insinuating taunts of the Vijayanagara monarch and his minister pierced him to his heart, he heard them calmly and started towards the north. The talisman he still kept with him, though he no more cared to look at it and examine it every day. Thus was the husband of the most chaste Ambika poisoned in his judgment, and, after leaving Vijayanagara, he banished from his mind all thoughts of her.

The various countries he passed through, and their scenery, people's manners and customs engaged his attention. After a seven months' journey, he reached Benares, and took up his abode in a fashionable quarter, generally occupied by well-to-do people.

He was still new to the place, and was spending the first month in making the acquaintance of several princes and noblemen's sons, who were staying in that sacred city, like himself. Almost opposite to his lodging there was sojourning the prince of Simhaladvipa, keeping a large establishment of servants and courtezans. The Pandiyan prince contrasted himself with the Simhala prince and thought he to himself:—

"How happy this prince of Simhala spends his stay here! What a large establishment he keeps! What a pity it is that I did not make as pleasant arrangements for myself!"

Thus thought he and wished to cultivate his acquaintance, but the Simhala prince seemed to care for nothing in the world except his own enjoyments. There was feasting, dancing and music in his house every day almost, but he kept it all to himself, and invited none to it.

Now the Pandiyan prince was always unhappy. His wife's conduct since he had married her, the curious talisman which still preserved its colour notwithstanding the months that had passed since he first received it from her hands, her goodness, sound learning, and then that she should so easily have received the Vijayanagara minister to her embrace, would come to his mind in his loneliness and make him extremely sad. At other times, he would entirely forget her, and even if he thought of her, would never bestow any thought upon her conduct, or how his reputation would be affected by it, as long as he did not regard her as his wife. But little by little he entirely gave up his ideas about his wife, and his great object was to cultivate the friendship of the prince of Simhaladvipa, and enjoy, in his company, all the festivities to which that prince was so addicted.

Meanwhile the fair name of Ambika had been spoilt by the minister of Vijayanagara. But she had no idea of how great the mischief was that has been done. All she had wanted were funds for the Siva temple, which her lord had ordered her to acquire for herself. The funds

had been acquired in the manner directed. So when the merchant, after giving away all that he had to Devi, left Madura for the north, and when all this property was safely and secretly collected and kept in the choultry, Ambika said to Devi :—

"My dear friend, I mean to entrust the building of the Siva temple to you, for I must leave this place soon, if I am to execute the last hard condition of my lord. Meanwhile, you must daily go to the palace to receive the dole for our maintenance. Everything must go on, as if, I remained here. Not a word, not a syllable, must escape from your lips about my absence. The building of the Siva temple, opposite to our choultry, must commence from to-morrow, and slowly must the work go on. You must keep a regular account of all the money that you spend upon it, and it must be built strictly from the funds that we have acquired from the merchant."

Devi listened eagerly to what all Ambika said, and put her a thousand questions, and promised to do all a maid-servant could do in helping Ambika.

Now, as her lord left for Benares, the princess had determined to follow him there in disguise, for successfully accomplishing the last and the most severe of his conditions—that she should, through him and without his knowledge,—give birth to a son. But she now saw that unless she had strong help the successful execution of her project would be an extremely difficult, nay, an impossible, task. So she wrote to her father secretly about her hard life, and why she had to go to Benares, and saying that for this journey she wanted a good retinue composed of men and women quite foreign to India, a very confidential

man for superintending her affairs at Madura, and ample funds for her journey and stay at Benares. Her father had the greatest regard for his daughter, and so he at once sent men and money, and, as desired by his daughter, made the whole retinue wait at a day's journey from Madura. The men and women that composed this retinue were all persons from the Simhaladvipa, and the king made two of his confidential ministers assume the guise of common men of that island, and ordered them to obey the princess's orders.

One of these men was to superintend the work tnat Devi was to undertake for the Siva temple; and great was Ambika's delight when she saw him near her, disguised as a beggar. She came to know through him that a retinue of a hundred women, with another person, disguised like himself, was waiting for her at a day's journey from Madura. Her joy knew no bounds when she heard of this. She called Devi to her side, recommended her to the confidential friend in disguise, and made arrangements that the Siva temple should be built by him with funds supplied by Devi. She then took a box from the hands of the diguised friend, which contained some thing for her from her father, and went in to her own room. After a *ghatika* she returned, and the persons found a strange prince standing before them, and no longer the princess Ambika, for the box that the princess received from her father contained a complete set of a male dress. The confidential friend accompanied the disguised Ambika to the spot where the retinue was waiting, and returned to Madura to attend to his duty. Thus did Ambika disguised as a prince, begin her long,

troublesome and rapid pilgrimage to Benares. She reached the sacred city a day after her lord's arrival there, and took up her abode opposite to his house, calling herself, in her disguise, the prince of Simhaladvipa.

The several festivities, the music and the nautch parties were purposely held in the house of the Simhaladvipa prince to attract the attention of the Pandiyan prince. But the latter never for a moment had any reason to suspect that these things were wholly done for his sake and he was for several days eagerly waiting for an opportunity to get himself introduced to one whom he considered to be the happiest prince in the world. In about a couple of months after his arrival in Benares, he was allowed to become the friend of the prince of Simhaladvipa, and little by little the friendship between the two princes grew thicker and thicker, till on a certain day the Simhaladvipa prince thus questioned his friend:

"O Pandiya, notwithstanding the several festivities, nautches and music that I get up day after day on your account, I now and then find that you are absent-minded. There must be some cause for all this. Though we have become bosom friends now, you have not been free with me. Tell me now, please, what lurks in your mind, and let me try my best to console you."

The prince then related all about his wife, except her banishment to the choultry, and so his listener came to understand who the pearl merchant had been. The Simhaladvipa prince laughed freely over the story, and this want of politeness enraged the vexed husband very much.

"You laugh now, O Simhala! I do not know how you would have liked these things, if your wife behaved thus towards you," said the Pandiyan prince, to which the listener replied:—

"Thank God, O Pandiya, I have no wife. I shall never marry one."

Now that the topic had been once mooted, there were several occasions in the next succeeding days on which they had again to revert to it. Though Ambika, disguised as the Simhala prince, had laughed over the volley of abuse that her husband, without knowing who his listener was, had showered upon her, there was no sadder soul in the world than herself at the time.

"Thus," thought she, "has my lord been deceived by the Vijayanagara minister, and believes me to be a bad woman and disbelieves my talisman, and calls it a magic. It is my fate to undergo such hardship. Let things only go on as I wish them now, and I shall win over my lord to my side."

One evening, the Simhala prince thus consoled his friend:—

"From all that I can gather from your speech, you seem to envy my happy life in the midst of so many courtezans, while you look upon your stay opposite to me all alone as a great hardship. If you have no objection, I can easily send you one of these courtezans for company."

The Pandiyan prince accepted his friends' suggestion, and from that night, the Simhala prince assumed the disguise of a courtezan of Simhaladvipa during the nights,

and spent them with her lord. The Pandiyan prince never suspected that the prince and the courtezan, who visited him every night, were one and the same person. Thus matters continued till Ambika became certain of her pregnancy, and the moment she was certain of this, her whole thoughts were on Madura. But before she thought of return ing there, she secured the best of his ornaments from her lord of his finger and ear rings, garlands and even the talisman of lotuses which she had given him. Having no more thought of his bad wife, and never suspecting the courtezan to be a princess or his wife, he gave her all that she asked and more. The object of the pilgrimage of the princess to Benares was now successfully accomplished, and four full months she had spent happily with her lord.

One day, the following letter was shown to the Pandiyan prince by the Simhala prince :—

"My dearest son ! Your presence is urgently needed here. Start at once and come away. You have spent too long a time at the sacred city."

"Do you see, O Pandiya, this letter from my father ? I cannot stay long. I must be off in a day or two. Though we may part now, we shall meet soon, I hope. Before I go, I want to advise you a bit, encouraged to do so by our long friendship. On your return to your country take care first to dive into the whole secret of your wife's conduct, before you think of punishing her. She may still be chaste, and the minister's story after all a lie. He might have purchased the ornaments easily from some maid-servants."

The Pandiyan thanked the Simhala for his good advice. Now that a kind and good friend suggested it to him, this idea,—that the Vijayanagara minister's version of his wife's character might after all be a tale and that the ornaments might have been got by unfair means, occurred to him at once. But the original warmth of his true regard to his singular wife, which he had before he came to Vijayanagara, was gone. He promised to himself secretly that, on his return, he would sift the matter well before taking any harsh steps, and no sooner had this idea entered into his head than he also wanted to return to his country.

The Simhala prince, after intimating to his friend that he would be going down to the south in a few days, resolved within himself that his departure must be sudden, secret and rapid. All arrangements necessary for this were secretly made, and executed the very next day. The third morning after the letter was seen by the Pandiyan prince he saw the mansion opposite his house vacant and the inmates all gone. On asking the land-lord, he was told of the abrupt departure of the inmates to their country on the previous night.

"What," thought the Pandiya. "Is friendship a mere name without any meaning attached to it, that my friend, the Simhala, should thus quit the place without one word, as to the time of his leaving? But let me not accuse him. I was advised by him only the other day not to be so hasty and foolish in believing the Vijayanagara Minister's accusation against my wife."

Thus thought he, and made arrangements for going also to his country.

As soon as princess Ambika in her male disguise left Benares, she requested her confidential friend to hasten the journey as much as possible and reached Madura in four months' time. As might be expected, she sent away to her father all the men and women who had formed her retinue a day's journey from her choultry, and taking only two chosen and trustworthy friends with her, she reached her poor habitation safely in the middle of the night. She met her confidential friends and Devi. Great were their rejoicings at this happy meeting, and Ambika was delighted to find that the temple was almost approaching to completion. The other part of her promise, too, she expected to be fulfilled in a couple of months in the natural course of circumstances. No one ever doubted that the princess had not remained in the choultry, for the morning doles had been regularly received, and now Devi and the other servants were mightily pleased at all the steps Ambika had taken for sucessfully retrieving her character. She requested them all to keep everything to themselves till her lord's return.

Six months after her return to Madura, her lord, the prince ot the Pandiya country, returned to his palace from his pilgrimage to the north. The first news that he heard, when entering his dominions, was a scandal about his banished wife. Births and deaths cannot be kept secret for long time, and it became known throughout the palace first, then throughout the city, that the banished princess had given birth to a son. Then the whole Pandiyan realm came to know of it. This event took place just four months before the return of the prince, who, after leaving Benares, travelled in haste for a few

days to join the Simhala prince, but, being unable to catch him up and obtain news of his movements, had taken his own time for his return journey.

The prince's return was welcome to all in the capital except to himself, for though now and then he consoled himself with the thought that the character of a banished princess should not at all put him out of his usual peace of mind, the scandal, as it appeared to him, was in the mouths of every one, and made him hang his head. His father the old king gave the prince a very kind and hearty welcome, but at their first meeting it so happened that Devi also was waiting to receive her morning dole. All the anger which the prince was keeping to himself broke out at once at the sight of that maid-servant :—

" Has your lady a baby with her ?" asked the prince.

" Yes, my lord," replied she.

"Cannot the father of that child feed you all ?" roared out the prince, his tone of speech having changed itself by anger to a high pitch.

Coolly the maid-servant replied :—" Your Highness, my lord, is its father, and in keeping with Your Highness's orders,, I come daily to the palace gates."

The prince, who had not the slightest reason to connect himself with its origin, thought himself doubly insulted by the cutting remarks of the maid-servant. He would have rushed at her and plunged his dagger in her body, had not half a dozen friends near him held him back, fearing his attitude. He abused her, and several people had already rushed at her to push her away, when the old king restored order, and severely reprimanded Devi.

But she was glad at heart that unwillingly the matters had taken such a course.

"Let me be abused and thrashed," thought she. "I shall be proud of having brought this separation between the prince and his chaste wife the sooner to an end."

With this thought, she bowed very respectfully to the prince, and requested him to turn his mind back to the Simhala prince, and that she was not at all joking, but in earnest, when she said that he was the father of the beautiful baby. She even went out of her way, and remarked that in all the fourteen worlds there could not be found a better lady than the princess of Akhandakaveri.

The prince's face changed colour when the name of the Simhala rince fell into his ears.

"What! Is it possible! What connection is there with that company in Benares and the baby's birth here? Let me enquire," thought he.

Devi was not that day permitted to return to the choultry. Immediately, the princess with her bahy and the other maid-servants were sent for. The prince, overcome by extreme anger, had forgotten all his hard conditions, which he had imposed on his wife before he started for the sacred city:—the raising of the Siva temple and the giving birth to a son by his own self without his knowledge.

Ever obedient to orders issued by her lord or his father, Ambika, with her little baby at her bosom arrived at the Court like an ordinary woman without

any reference to her position. But what did she, the gem of womankind, care for all the outward formalities? Her face, which bore on every line of it, furrows of deep anxiety and misery, indicated for all that her chaste innate character. Reaching the Court she bowed with grace to her father-in-law and then to her lord. When questioned by the former as to who was the father of the baby, she replied :—

"Respected father-in-law. Your noble son and my husband is its father. Let him kindly remember the Simhala prince, his friend at Benares, and the courtezan that visited him every night there. This is that courtezan, and the cause of all this is the imposition of two severe conditions which, your own son will explain to you. If he is doubtful of the courtezan, let him please examine these ornaments, which he presented to me.

Here she placed before the old king all the jewels that her husband had given her in her disguise as a courtezan. She then explained her whole story, from the beginning of her wedding night to that moment. All the people concerned in the affair were called and examined. The further the examination went the more the prince began to admire his chaste wife. What hardships, what renunciations she has undergone to please the whims of his own bad self? Even the Vijayanagara minister with his sovereign had to come in to give evidence, and on the former's saying that the princess he slept with for a night, as a pearl merchant, had a mole in her right cheek the last lingering doubt in the minds of the most suspicious of men assembled there was removed. This on examination was proved to exist on the face of the maid-servant who had put on the disguise of the princess for

a night. The examination was thorough and extremely minute, and before it was over there was not a single soul in the Court, who did not condemn the prince for his bad treatment of his excellent wife, nor praise Ambika for all her successful adventures and noble execution of her undertakings for unsullied fame.

The prince was more than sufficiently pleased. He took back with pleasure his virtuous wife, and many were the occasions when they recounted their Benares adventures. Once thus closely united by so many pleasant recollections and adventures they never became separated afterwards in their life. Ambika, by her purity of conduct, soundness of learning, and kindness to every one, became an object of respect to every person, and even to her husband. And they now lived together happily for a long time.

XXXIX

DEVOTED VATSALA

In a certain village there lived a Brahman named Patanibhagya. He had an affectionate wife named Vatsala. She was a very good woman, and was equally kind to all the members of her household, and especially to her mother-in-law, the mother of Patanibhagya. She was so sincerely attached to her that Vatsala's attachment to her mother-in law became proverbial throughout the village. Some people regarded it as madness, and began to doubt as to how she would survive her mother-in-law, as, in all probability, the old woman would die first. But the more considerate thought Vatsala to be merely a little wanting in common sense, and that was the real truth. She considered her mother-in-law as a goddess, and apart from sincere devotion to her, she was under the strong belief that daughters-in-law could not live in the world without mothers-in-law to guide and rule them. Every morning, as she rose up from her bed, she first worshipped her mother-in-law, consulted her taste in cooking the household meal, prepared only those dishes which she ordered, served her meal first, and then attended to the table of others. Thus it was with Vatsala; and her mother-in-law, on her part, as, of course, was natural, was deeply attached to her. Thus passed several happy years. But time must work its changes, and the old people must die giving place to new, and the end of the mother-in-law approached, and she passed away in the arms of her daughter-in-law.

The funeral rites followed and after a time the house revived from the mourning. It was a natural death in good old age. There was not much sorrow felt in the family. But to Vatsala the world became a non-entity. She had nothing now to care for in the world. Her monitor was no more. Who would receive henceforth her devotions? Who would direct her in her household duties? These became great riddles to her. Patanibhagya advised her to cheer up, but to no effect. His sound arguments were of no avail to soothe the sorrows of Vatsala, for she had not that quota of common sense,—the general property of all: what she wanted was some tangible and material object to be respected as her mother-in-law.

"I must have a mother-in-law. Give me a mother-in law, my dear husband," mourned Vatsala.

Finding all reasoning to be vain, and, pitying his poor wife, who was so good and kind to him in every thing, he went a little out of the ordinary way and promised to supply Vatsala with a mother-in law. He went to a carpenter and brought a wooden image, and, presenting it to his wife, addressed her thus:—

"My dear Vatsala, you are dying for want of a mother-in-law. I have consulted several doctors and learned men. They gave me a wooden mother-in-law for you. You can now be happy. You can worship this as your old mother-in-law. Consult this wooden image in household duties, and be thus in every way happy."

Vatsala's pleasure at the receipt of a substitute for her mother-in-law can be better imagined than described. She placed it in a prominent part of the verandah of the upper storey of her house. To her it was everything.

She consulted it. She fed it twice a day with a sumptuous meal, and spent every minute that she could save from household duties to the care of the image. But how could the wood speak? How could the wood eat? These were plain questions with plain answers to Vatsala. For she devised the answers after putting the questions to the image, and imagined that the answers came from the mother-in-law herself. She would stand before the image and ask :—

"My mother, what shall I prepare for your dinner to-night? You have not been well to-day."

After putting this question, she would herself answer:—

"Yes, I understand you. Your order is that I should prepare pepper-water without *dal*. I shall do so."

Her simplicity was a source of general amusement. She would spread a large leaf before the image and serve on it the meal meant for her mother-in-law. Some mischievous relation would wait for an opportunity and take away all the meal, leaving the leaf clean. But Vatsala thought that her mother-in-law had swallowed it all. Thus passed some days.

Patanibhagya had to go out on a mercantile tour with a neighbour for a few months. He supplied the house with grain and articles of food to last for six months, and started on his journey. His neighbour did the same, and followed him. Other relations of Patanibhagya, too, had to go away, and thus Vatsala was left alone in the house with her wooden mother-in-law. She was very glad of this. Her only living friend was the wife of the neighbour who had accompanied Patanibhagya on his tour. That their husbands

were friends on tour was the great cause of this friendship, though they were of opposite natures. Vatsala was an idiot and a fool, but the other woman was the very type of intelligence and cunning. Finding Vatsala was a great fool, and it did not take much time to discover this, she wanted to profit by it. Whatever ill-health Vatsala imagined in her wooden mother-in-law she would aggravate. She recommended sumptuous meals for the mother-in-law as the only cure for weakness, and Vatsala spent all her leisure in preparing rice of several kinds, puddings, muffins, etc., to feed her, and all these were served twice and even thrice a day. Her friend took them all away secretly, and thus saved herself the trouble of kindling a fire at her own home, growing fat at the expense of Vatsala. She saved all the articles stored up by her own husband. Vatsala did not care for the expense. If her mother in–law was well it was all in all to her ; and she was improving? Yes ; undoubtedly, at least to Vatsala she was, and her friend told her so every day. Thus things went or for some months.

Their husbands returned from their tour. Patanibhagya examined his house, and discovered that he must supply his house again with food. He asked his wife how it was that everything was exhausted so soon, while she was the only soul at home to eat.

" My dear husband, how is it that you have forgotten your mother, my mother-in-law? Even since you left us, she was always falling into weak health, and I had to feed her every day sumptuously. Must not two souls eat ? And must not my mother-in-law be fed?" replied she.

The patience of the husband was exhausted. However much he might have excused her for her foolishness, the waste of all the food touched him to the quick.

"May you and your mother-in-law go to hell!" roared he, and, kicking the wooden image first, he dealt the same punishment to his wife. The wife did not feel herself insulted in any way, but she felt acutely the sufferings of her mother-in-law.

"You have kicked her down. May the gods curse you! you have kicked your own mother. How will the gods excuse you? O my mother-in-law, my dear mother-in-law. In your old age to be thus kicked! What a good shock you must have received by your fall?" wept Vatsala, and, disregarding her husband's blows, she flew to the fallen image, took it up in her hands, and protected it from further injury from Patanibhagya.

The husband could contain himself no more. He drove his wife with her precious mother-in-law out of the house. Not that she cared: for she had still her mother-in-law, and could go with her where she pleased and live comfortably. For is not a mother-in-law a goddess to a daughter-in-law? Thus arguing with herself, Vatsala left the village that very evening, carrying on her shoulders her poor mangled mother-in-law, and walked through a forest. The sun had just set. Darkness covered the world. Vatsala notwithstanding the charm of a goddess on her shoulders, was a little afraid to pursue her way through the forest all alone. She wanted to rest somewhere for the night; and where else could she rest but on a tree? So she climbed up a tree and with her mother-in-law in her hands sat there for the night.

The tree on which Vatsala sat was in the middle of a thick forest and it was a large and broad one; and it was the the tree under which the robbers of the forest used to assemble to divide among themselves the plunders of the night. Just at the last watch of the night nearly a dozen robbers came, and were engaged in separating their plunder into several groups as the share for each. Vatsala had no sleep the whole night and now she heard the horrible conversation of the robbers. The counting of coins jingled on her ears. Her whole frame trembled, and down fell the wooden mother-in-law as the first effect of her fears, just as the robbers were proceeding to take possession of their respective shares. They knew that the Raja's men had been watching them for a long time, and so in the twinkling of an eye most of them ran away. After her mother-in-law down came Vatsala with a horrible crash, and those that remained imagined her to be the very Raja himself. So away they ran and the wood was cleared of the robbers. Vatsala fell down senseless, but after a time she recovered her senses. The morning had now dawned and she perceived the heaps of coin with her wooden mother-in-law in their midst. She fell down before her goddess and worshipped her.

"What will your son—that son who kicked you last evening—say now, when I return to him with these hoards of money! O my goddess! O my holy mother-in-law!"

So saying Vatsala collected everything in haste and returned home. Meanwhile, Patanibhagya, after the excitement of the moment, was very sorry for his cruelty to his poor wife, for it was a settled fact the she was an idiot. So he waited for the morning to go out in search

of her; and great was his joy when she herself returned to him with so much money! In her own fashion, she told the story about the money, and how her mother-in-law had given it to replace the exhausted store at home, and preached to her husband that he must be more kind to such a kind mother! The sight of the money consoled him much, though at heart he laughed at his wife's theory, and was not blind to the true cause of the acquisition. And what is lost in humouring an idiotic and stupid, but for all that, a good wife? So Patanibhagya stored up all the money, and told his wife that all the good fortune was due to her devotion to her mother-in-law.

"It is my goddess, my mother-in-law, my dear husband, that gave us all this wealth," repeated Vatsala even before her husband finished his speech.

"Yes, true it is, true it is. From to-day worship her all the more for it," repeated the husband.

The noon her cunning friend visited Vatsala, who, in her own plain way, related the great boon that her mother-in-law that day conferred upon her family by the gift of unexpected wealth. The neighbour heard it with great pleasure, for her avarice had already deviced for her a plan of making herself rich in the same way. Outwardly she promised to worship her own mother-in-law in that way, and made a copy of Vatsala's image, but her secret intention was to go to the tree in which Vatsala had hidden herself the previous night, and try to see whether fortune would favour her also. For this purpose she carefully noted the exact position of the tree.

As soon as night approached, without the knowledge of the husband, she ran to the forest to the very tree and concealed herself in it with, of course, the wooden mother-in-law, to surprise the robbers. Even as she expected, the robbers came that night also, and became engaged in dividing their booty. She threw down first the wooden stump, and the robbers were a little afraid at first; but their money, hard won in their own way of thieving, was not to be thus easily given up every night. So they made a careful search, and caught hold of the woman.

"You wretched hag: you are caught at last," roared they. "You frightened us last night, and we were fools and ran away. But instead of killing you we will make a lesson of you to others who would thus dare to beard us in our own den."

All the shrieks and cries of the woman, and her pleadings that the woman of the previous night was a different one were of no avail. Her hair was cut. Her nose was cut. And thus mutilated she was driven out of the forest and reached home with her body disfigured for her pains.

Her husband, who had missed her the previous night received her with great anger, and on hearing the cause of her disfigurement spoke to her in very severe terms. He plainly told her that it was her avarice that brought her that just punishment. But what was to be done next? He applied soothing medicines to her broken nose and advised her never to relate her story to any one.

XL

EBHYA, THE LEARNED FOOL

A NOODLE STORY

In the town of Manamadurai, in the Pandiyan country, there lived a young Brahman, named Ebhya, who was a fool. He was married to a girl in Madura. Ebhya was a learned man, as he thought, in his own Sanskrit way, and like Sakara, in Sudraka's play, could always quote verses and rules, as authority for all his actions. He wished to see his wife. He, therefore, started for Madura. On his way, he saw the dead body of an ass lying neglected in the way.

" What", thought he, "this was a living being. It had no friends in this world. There is no one now to bury it or cremate it, and it is, therefore, lying thus neglected in the dead stage of its existence. If I do now the meritorious action of cremating this dead ass I obtain the boon of having performed *Asvamedha* (horse-sacrifice). For does not the sage say:—

Anathaprethasamskaram asvamedaphalam bhavet.

The cremating of an ownerless dead body is equal to the performance of a horse-sacrifice.

"Why should I not thus in an easy way obtain that? What have I to do here? It is not much. Fuel is easily obtained in the jungle. I have only to carry the dead ass to a good distance in the jungle, away from the common path."

Thus thinking, Ebhya lifted up the dead animal and essayed to carry it into the jungle. He struggled hard. It was a very heavy weight. But then, how could merit be obtained without exertion and trouble? Alas, the weight was more than his strength could bear, and he did not know what to do. The merit, however, must be obtained, for he had found out the easiest way of attaining it. A horse-sacrifice is a very costly thing which only monarchs may attempt: whereas without any such cost, and by merely collecting the fuel necessary in the wood, and by cremating a dead ass he could now attain that merit.

The wisdom of Ebhya was never at fault, and he at once found means for getting out of his new difficulty. The utterance of the sages that the head is the important member of the animal body rushed into his mind :—

Sarvasya gatrasya Sirah pradhanam.

The head is the chief of all parts of the body.

He praised his memory and his ready wit and at once with a small knife he severed the head of the dead ass from its trunk. And having now secured the head he proceeded on his way to reach a spot in the jungle where the cremation could take place without nuisance to travellers. But for this he had a long way to go and the severed head becomes a repulsive thing to carry. But the undertaking was nevertheless not to be given up. So he quoted to himself another saying and it ran thus :—

Sarvendriyanam nayanam pradhanam.

The Eye is the chief of all the senses.

Under this rule, Ebhya laid down the head and pulled out its two eyes only, and proceeded on his journey. Soon he reached a lonely part of the wood, where he cremated the eyes of the ass with all the formalities of a funeral rite. Thus by an easy way and at no cost but that of a few dried sticks, which the woods supplied him with, he obtained the merit of a horse sacrifice.

According to the Hindu rules, a person who has performed a funeral rite is affected with pollution for ten days. So Ebhya, without any mark on his forehead and with his locks untied and with other marks of mourning, entered his father-in-law's house just at evening time. The first relation he met was his mother-in-law in the courtyard of the house. She was just finishing her evening bath in that part of the house, as she did not expect any body then, and had by mistake left the outer door ajar instead of bolting it. Ebhya ran up suddenly to where she was bathing, and falling on the ground paid his respects to her according to the Hindu way of the *namaskara*, for does not the rule say :

Drishtamatram Namaskuryat Svasram Svasuram evacha.

Worship your mother-in-law and your father-in-law as soon as you see them.

Under this authority the son-in-law did his duty. He did not care for the occasion, time, and place. The strict rules were to him venerable authorities, and he rightly observed them. His agitated mother-in-law first took him to be an impolite young man, and then toned down her opinion at the stupidity which she soon discovered in him. Thus, with this introduction our hero entered his wife's house.

After thus paying his respects to his wife's mother, Ebhya went to a big haystack in the middle of the courtyard, and, mounting it, sat on the top of it, for he had heard the rule that people on elevated places are always respected :—

Uchchaih sthaneshu pujyante.

They worship those placed on high.

So to extract respect he chose the spot. His brothers-in-law, for he had three such relations, soon returned home and their mother directed their attention to her son-in-law on the top of the hay-stack.

"Our *namaskaras* (respects) to you, O son-in-law! When did you come down? Why do you sit there? Descend, please," said they, and after thus receiving the respect he thought due he came down. But he did not mingle with the company. He stole up to a corner of the hall, and stood apart.

"Why do you thus stand aloof? Come near, please," said the brothers-in-law.

"I am polluted," was the reply, and this was given out with all the sincerity, with low voice and dejected face. Not wishing to extract the cause of the mourning from his own mouth, the brothers-in-law went in and asked their mother whether she knew anything about it. She was not able to enlighten them, but gave them enough of information to make them suspect that something was wrong with the brain of her son-in-law. The brothers not believing his statement entirely, approached Ebhya, and asked him to be more plain. Ebhya then narrated the details of his journey. But, as

it was his first visit they did not like to displease him. So they mildly tried to convince him of his foolishness, and though he was beyond conviction he went through the formality of mingling with his wife's relations. Grand preparations were then made in the house to feed the newly arrived guest.

"Is there anything that you specially like which we should order to be cooked?" asked the brothers.

"Nothing," said Ebhya; "but I wish all vegetables to be flavoured with castor oil, for Dhanvantri—the master of medicine—had said that castor oil is the destroyer of wind—*erandatailam vataghnam*."

The dinner time approached, scented oil to rub on the body and luke-warm water to bathe in were placed in the court-yard, and according to the Hindu custom Ebhya was requested to undergo this happy bath (*mangalasnana*), and prepare himself for the meal. Refusal would have been regarded as extremely impolite, so Ebhya bathed and had the scented oil rubbed over his body. Now the rule runs:—"*pravahabhimukham snanam*—bathe facing the current," and how was this to be done in a courtyard with all the water available stored up in a big vessel? But Ebhya would not give up his rules; so he upset the vessel, and running to the end of the yard, where the water would find its outlet, laid himself down on the ground to let it pass over his body. The brothers who witnessed this mad act did not understand him for a moment. They were stupefied by these unprecedented actions. But as they had contracted relationship with Ebhya, they merely mildly rebuked him, and gave him fresh water to bathe in.

At last even the dinner was over and then, at bed-time, his beautiful young wife for the first time was sent into his room. Now the saying is:—

Bharya rupavati satruh.

A beautiful wife is an enemy.

Ebhya saw she was very beautiful and at once concluded that a beautiful wife must always be an enemy. He looked round him and found a small iron wire with which lamps are trimmed up. He took hold of it and making his wife sit by him he thrust it into one of her eyes. The pain was more than she could bear. She raised a cry and her brothers, suspecting something serious, ran up to the door, which was bolted inside. They knocked but Ebhya would not open it. He was not going to stop there. He took up the light and gazed at her writhing in pain.

"You are no more beautiful. You are no more my enemy. You are my good friend and chaste wife from this moment," said Ebhya.

"Open the door for God's sake," roared the brothers, but Ebhya had not completed his idiotic proceedings. He surveyed his wife a second time, she had still one eye. The saying is:—*Ekakshi kulanasini*——the one eyed woman is a destroyer of the family;" so Ebhya put out the remaining eye also. The doors were now rooted out by force, and the wretched blind girl discovered.

"What hast thou done, thou scoundrel, thou idiot, thou ass?" roared all the people. Ebhya in his own cool way quoted authorities for his actions. They thrashed him from head to foot.

"I am lord of my own wife, and who are you to beat me?" said Ebhya in reprimand.

"Come out, you fool, we will take you to the king," cried they. And Ebhya, not giving up his own rights, said:—

"Very well, proceed; let us go to the king himself, and ·t us see whether he will deny me the rights of a husband ver a wife."

Thus they all went that very night to the palace. Every-ng in the streets, even every dog, was found asleep. palace and the harem were reached, and the crowd pped outside; but Ebhya went on undaunted, for he s a fool, and he had no fear of the consequences of actions. The swiftness with which he proceeded de it impossible for the guards to oppose him with- disturbance, and a disturbance in the harem premises dreaded. The king, if disturbed in his rest, would ne down heavily upon the disturbers. So Ebhya, rrested, entered the very inner rooms of the palace. queen was sitting there in silence, and with his al head on her right thigh the monarch was sleep- soundly. Even the air feared to blow hard thot, such was the dread the king inspired. Silence ned. Ebhya, undaunted, placed his head on the en's left thigh, and, stretching his body in a direction osite to that of the king, fell asleep. What could the queen do? If she spoke and thus disturbed her lord sleep she would verily lose her head. But the arch's sleep was soon disturbed; our hero was a great rer. The king rose up in a great fury, and a strange ctacle met his sight. A man asleep on the king's own

bed with his head on the queen's lap! He gave a push to the impertinent head, and Ebhya rose up.

"How came you to dare this impertinence?" asked the king. Ebhya came out with his long story and the crowd of the people, which had collected, caused the king to go outside. He now grasped the whole position.

"But what made you sleep in that posture?" roared the king. Undaunted, Ebhya replied:—"*Yatha raja th-tha prajah*:—as is the monarch so are the subjects." Yo slept in that posture, and so I did under the authority that rule."

The monarch's anger was changed into laughter. Ev the fierce king pitied the helpless idiot, who was so rea with his misapplied quotations.

XLI

A KNOCK ON THE HEAD OF AKIRI

In the town of Tanjore there once lived a famous musician Mahasena. He was a great specialist in singing the great tune known as Akiri.[1] But it vexed him very much that this tune which he so greatly admired and which he had so carefully cultivated should be thought so inauspicious in the morning. He had a great desire to prove to the world that the idea entertained towards *Akiri* was wrong. But, of course, he must first prove it to himself before his taking up the task of doing so to the public at large. But how to do it ?

Mahasena argued thus with himself :—" They say that if *Akiri* is sung in the morning, we cannot get any food during the whole day. All right. If I start with food in my hand, sing *Akiri* first and then eat that food, will it not amount to a proof that the belief held by the people about *Akiri* is wrong ?"

Thus thought he, and resolved to put the idea into execution. But he could not sing as he proposed in the town, for his brother musicians and others who would recognize the tune would not permit it. So he resolved to go outside the town to some respectable distance and away from the public notice, and there put his resolution to the test. He started with food tied up in his upper

1. This is the name of a tune in South-Indian music. The time for singing it is generally between 8 p. m. and 4 a. m., and it is the tune most adapted for giving vent to mournful feelings. It is most melodious, but it is considered very inauspicious to sing it after six in the morning, for there is also a belief among the musicians of Southern India that he who sings *Akiri* at six will go without food during the day.

cloth, and left home very early in the morning, five *ghatikas* before sunrise. Just at dawn he reached the banks of the river Vettar, whose bed was dry, as the summer season had almost set in. He walked up the bed a little distance, and chose a fine, sandy and secluded spot to sit down on and sing *Akiri*. The place itself, the fresh morning, the luxuriant bamboo groves on either side the river, the thousand and one birds which had already commenced their songs to greet the rising lord of the day—all these fired the ambition of Mahasena to begin the *Akiri* at once, and do full justice in the clear morning to the tune he had so specially cultivated. He sat down. Near him a bamboo was hanging down, and not to spoil the food by placing it on the bare sand he tied the bundle to the tip of a branch of the hanging bamboo and commenced his favourite *Akiri*. A person who specially cultivated a certain tune generally takes ten or twelve ghatikas' time to do full justice to it, and our hero, shaded by the extensive shadow of the bamboos behind, did not perceive the heat of the ascending sun, and went on singing and singing till it was midday. And why should he not? For, as soon as he finished singing, he had only to bathe in the crystal water that was running in a small part of the river and eat the food he had with him. So, without any anxiety about his going without food in consequence of singing his favourite tune, Mahasena went on exhausting all the several minute departments of the *Akiri*. The more he sang the more he enjoyed his music, and above all the means devised by him to upset a prejudice. At last the song was finished, and our hero looked for his bundle of food.

Alas! Prejudice had won the day. His bundle was no more within his reach, but was hanging high above

him just as he had tied it on the tip of the bamboo. Now the bamboo reed has the peculiarity of bending down low at night. As the sun advances in the morning the bamboo too advances from its pendent posture, and stands almost erect during midday. This Mahasena did not know, nor had he brains enough to suspect it.

"So, after all, what they say about *Akiri* is too true," thought he. And as the bamboo is not a plant which one can easily climb up, Mahasena had to give up his bundle of food. His upper cloth too was lost. So, with only a single cloth remaining with him, he proceeded to the waterside, bathed, finished his ablutions, and proceeded to the nearest village to beg a meal from some charitable person.

Fortunately for him he had not far to go. At a *ghatika's* distance there was a Brahman village, where a rich Mirasadar was celebrating the birth-day of his first-born child. On such occasions every Brahman is freely fed, provided he is present at the time of eating. Our hero thought that an opportunity of proving to the public that by singing *Akiri* a person does not go without food for the rest of the day was not yet lost. So he at once approached the host and requested to be fed. The Mirasadar in reply explained to him that all the available space in the house was taken up by the Brahmans who had already commenced to eat, but said that if he would wait for half a *ghatika* he could join in the second batch for meals. "As you please, Sir," said Mahasena, inwardly delighted, as so short a time did not make much difference, and that he would soon have his food. And was he not right ? Who would refuse him food on the occasion of public feeding.

Soon the first batch of meals was over and the guests left the house after receiving betel-leaves and areca-nuts. Only a select few, about a dozen, remained for the second batch : and all these, with the exception of Mahasena, were the inmates of the house. Ten or twelve leaves were spread now in the hall of the Mirasadar's house, and all the remaining diners sat down before them. Mahasena occupied one corner. The moment the food was served in his leaf his heart leapt with joy, not at the sight of the food itself, but at the idea that he had secured food to eat, notwithstanding that he had sung *Akiri* that morning. Now after serving food to all, the lady of the house pours *apochana*-water into each diner's hand as a sign to commence, and according to this custom the Mirasadar's wife poured a spoonful of water in the up-raised palm of Mahasena, with whom she commenced the *apochana*-ceremony that day. As soon as Mahasena received the *apochana*, he uttered aloud and in joy, even before drinking it " A knock on the head of Akiri." But alas ! before he finished the words and before he had lifted up his right palm to drink the *apochana*, he received several blows on his back from one or two servants of the house who lifted him up from his seat, notwithstanding his cries and lamentations, and pushed him out, bolting the door behind. Mahasena cried out from the street to be allowed to explain : he wept : he begged. But no one would pity him. No one would open the gate for him.

What a world of misery ! He had sat before his leaf, he had witnessed the serving of the food, he had received even the *apochana*, and yet he had not tasted one grain of food. "Is this all for having sung *Akiri* ? Why should

I have been thus thrashed and pushed out ?" Thus argued our hero.

By this time the second batch of diners had finished, the door was opened, and the master of the house came out. "Get away, Sir. Do not stand before me," were the first words he uttered on seeing Mahasena. "You are a beggar. You came to me begging for meals. What have I done to you that you should insult my wife thus ? Is this your return for her having given you the *apochana* first?"

Our musician stood bewildered. Where and how had he abused the wife of the Mirasadar ? He ransacked his brains. He found no clue. He pleaded innocence. And again roared the master :—" A knock on the head of Akiri" did you not say ? And why should you, a beggar, say such a thing of the wife of a respectable Mirasadar ? Is it for her having given you the *apochana* first ?

Now unfortunately for our hero, the name of the Mirasadar's wife was Akiri Ammal or Akiri. And as soon as he had spoken, every one took his words to be aimed at the good woman. However, when the whole thing was explained and the real state of affairs understood, Mahasena was excused and was given his food.

But it was then very late in the day. So he made up his mind never more to sing *Akiri* in the mornings, and returned home a wiser man.

XLII

A DEVIL AND AN OILMONGER

Tenur is a village near Trichinopoly, and there lived in it an oilmonger named Chengalroy of very humble means. He was not prosperous in his trade and was growing poorer day by day. He wished to start a fresh oil-mill and had not the wherewithal to buy a tamarind tree, from the trunk of which a mill is ordinarily made. Fortunately, however, there was an old tree with a trunk of large dimensions, just the sort of trunk which the oil-monger was in need of, at the back of his own house. It was not before a good deal of argument with himself that he resolved to fell the tree and convert the trunk thereof into an oil-mill, for the tree yielded a good quantity of tamarind fruit which met the annual requirements of his household. Having made up his mind to fell the tree, he consulted the priests as to what would be an auspicious hour and then approached it to apply his axe to its aged trunk. The first stroke with the axe he dealt with his own hands in order to avail himself of the benefits to be derived from the operation being commenced at the auspicious hour. He then called in the aid of his servants to proceed with the work of felling the tree. It so happened, however, that this tree had long been the abode of a *shaitan* or a devil. When the first stroke of the axe fell upon the tree the ancient devil thought that the oil-monger simply wished to deprive him of his favourite and permanent abode. So down he jumped, and falling at the feet of Chengalroy in a suppliant posture humbly requested him to leave him in undisturbed possession of

his shady abode and promised to reward him adequately for his kindness. Chengalroy, though apparently dumbfounded by the sudden appearance of the devil, summoned up courage and interrogated the devil as to who he was and what had brought him there.

"I am the devil living in this tree," replied the *Shaitan.* "I have been living here for the last twenty yearss and before that several other devils were the occupants of this tree. I, therefore, most respectfully request of you not to destory this ancient abode of my race, and if you give me an assurance of undisturbed peace, I am ready to render you any service you may demand of me in return."

Chengalroy at once grasped the situation and wished to make the most of the devil's fright, so he said loudy and angrily :—"I cannot possibly leave you impudent devils thus to occupy my tree. But if you want to continue you must bring me one hundred bags of gingelly seed before the last day of every month. The day you fail to supply this, as sure as I live, I will come out with my axe and fell the tree to the ground."

"Agreed," replied the *Shaitan.* "You will see, Sir, that before sunset on the last day of every month, I shall, as a return for your kindness, deposit in your hall a hundred bags of gingelly seed, with every seed perfect, without any chaff or dust, and without moth or mud in it."

Thus the bargain was struck. The tree was left undisturbed and Chengalroy thanked his stars for this happy and unexpected turn in his fortunes. From that moment he considered himself a very rich man, and there was no doubt that he rose to be such very soon. Month

after month the bags poured in regularly, and in the course of two years Chengalroy became the leading oil-monger in the village of Tenur. More than a dozen mills creaked out their harsh notes about his house. The compound of his house was extended and a portion of the backyard was converted into a stall for the bullocks bought for working the mills.

One day Chengalroy purchased a new bull from the village of Puduppey, five miles east of Tenur, to replace one of his animals which had died of murrain. Unfortunately this new animal too began to develop symptoms of the disease, so Chengalroy consulted the village cattle-doctors, who recommended branding. It was now nearly four years since his agreement with the devil and since the gifts of the gingelly seeds began. On the morning of the day on which Chengalroy consulted the cattle-doctors, a certain friend of the devil in the tamarind tree came to visit him and finding him very much dejected and disspirited asked him the reason for it. The new comer's name was Dhoby Raghava and the devil said :—"O, Dhoby Raghava, you do not know the misery that has come over us. We have an enemy whose sole duty it is to root us all out. To please him we have to plunder a hundred bags of gingelly seed every month, and deliver the same to him before the close of the last day of the month. Owing to the failure of the gingelly crop for the last three successive years, I have had to travel thousands of miles on my plundering expeditions to bring the promised number of bags : but alas ! this month go where I could, I have not been able to get a single bag. To-morrow is the last day of the month and I do not know whether I shall live or

die the day after. If ever I die, I request you to protect my wife and children."

Dhoby Raghava, who was the boldest of devils and of an imposing appearance and of great strength, laughed at the timidity of his friend and said :—" Is there any one in this world who dare cross our path ? Show him to me and I will crush him in a minute." "Don't speak loud, you fool ; if ever one syllable of what you have uttered reaches the ear of Chengalroy we are all undone." "Who is this Chengalroy ? Point him out to me ; I will finish him off in the twinkling of an eye," bragged Dhoby Raghava. The old devil smiling at the foolhardiness of the new comer and resolving to leave him to his fate pointed out from the tree Chengalroy's house and ran away leaving the devil—Dhoby Raghava—to take up his abode at the foot of the tree.

The time at which the new devil took up his position under the tree happened to coincide with the arrival of Chengalroy and the village cattle-doctor for branding the bull And a moment thereafter the oilmonger came into the backyard with a red-hot iron rod and directed the servant to bring out immediately the "Puduppey," meaning by "Puduppey" the bull which he recently purchased at the village of "Puduppey." But as the word "Puduppey" also means the "new-devil," Dhoby Raghava, the devil who bragged so much, thought that he it was that was referred to by "Puduppey" and that the red-hot iron was meant for branding him as a punishment for his having ventured to come to the aid of the old devil. Escape was out of the question, for any attempt in that direction would only be

visited with a double chastisement by the invulnerable oil-monger. Thus thought Dhoby Raghava and made up his mind to make a clean breast of his guilt and to crave mercy.

So approaching Chengalroy, the devil fell prostrate at his feet and made the following piteous appeal :—"I am the Puduppey (new devil) my lord, and am extremely sorry for having so foolishly ventured to oppose you. My friend the devil in your tamarind tree was perfectly right in having warned me against my foolhardy attempts. But I was a fool not to listen to his friendly advice. Only spare me on this occasion. I will never more commit similar follies and for your kindness in sparing me I shall in place of one hundred bags of gingelly seed that are now being brought every month to you, give you monthly on the last day a hundred pots of fresh drawn gingelly oil and thus spare you the trouble of extracting the oil and the cost of maintaining a large stock of bulls and mills and a number of servants."

The oilmonger, who had by this time gained sufficient insight into the ways of devils, at once saw the position and furiously brandishing the burning iron thundered forth :—"Ah, so you have at last understood my power? Take care from this moment of your cursed life. Take care that the oil is in no way adulterated and that every pot is full to the brim. If a pot happens to be short of even a single spoonful, this rod shall rip you open."

"O! take away that rod from my sight! Cast away that cursed weapon from your hand! I agree to all the conditions and you shall see the truth of that statement before the sun sets to-morrow."

Dhoby Raghava, the thoughtless and impudent devil, was then discharged and ever remembering the fierce rod, he continued to supply Chengalroy with the best oil, one hundred pots full, every month. Everyone in Tenur purchased oil from our hero, as the purest could only be had of him. Thus he grew to be a very rich trader without any exertion and all by chance of his having taken advantage of the timidity of two devils.

XLIII

A BANISHED PRINCE

At the beginning of the *Kaliyuga*, a great King named Nanda was reigning over the country of Vanjai. His great weakness was that he believed very much in astrology. Nanda had two wives, by neither of whom had he any children. He was therefore greatly vexed at heart, and practised penances. And, as he expected, divine favour soon dawned upon him, and in the fiftieth year of his life he had a son by his first wife. He sent for the astrologers to have the Prince's horoscope cast. After a few minutes' calculation of the position of the several planets at the time of the birth of the Prince, the astrologers looked at one another with a desponding countenance. The King, however, said that he had already formed a fair idea of the influence which the event of the birth of the Prince would exercise over his reign, and that they need not therefore fear, or conceal the truth from him. The astrologers thereupon took courage and explained that bloodshed, rebellions, wars, famine and pestilence and a thousand other unheard-of miseries would befall his realm as long as the Prince lived under his roof; and, to nip the calamity in the bud, the King was advised to remove the Prince at once from the palace. This was rather a hard case. But what could the King do? He cursed his knowledge of astrology and at first thought of killing the baby. But the instinctive feelings of a father and the pitiful pleadings of the mother stood in the way of his putting the idea into action. While in this plight a way out of the difficulty suggested itself to him. At a distance of three or four miles to the East of the city there was a forest, in the

midst of which Nanda built a hut and placed in it his first wife and the baby. No assistance of any kind was given to these unfortunate souls. The mother was, however, permitted to go to the town every day and beg her food in the public streets, though even this was considered a great concession. The second wife was always the favourite of Nanda; but when the baby arrived the first was shown greater consideration and affection. But the banishment of the first Queen with her baby to the forest restored the second one to her former position in her husband's estimation.

The first Queen was leading a very miserable life. The boy, as he grew up, was showing signs of extraordinary intelligence. Trained in the school of adversity from the very day of his birth, left to take care of himself every day in the lonely forest when his mother was away in the town, compelled to lead the life of a sturdy forester, as he grew up, owing to the unkindness of an idiotic father, the Prince developed into a prodigy. Nature was his school. Self-reliance was his *forte.* The giants of the forest were his friends. The sweet-singing birds were his sympathisers and consolers in misery. Though he had not much opportunity of studying and improving his mind, he was quick in grasping what was taught him by stray visitors to the forest; and when thus the desire for knowledge was kindled, he utilised every opportunity that was afforded to him to steal into the town and learn as much as he could. He preserved secrecy about his identity. Every one that met him and taught him for charity took him to be a true beggar. But they were all pleased at the superiority of his intellect. Thus passed sixteen years of the Prince's life.

Now there lived a weaver at a few miles' distance to the east of the forest where the Prince dwelt. He invested all his property, which was a lakh of pagodas, in manufacturing a woman's garment (*sari*) and offered it for sale to Nanda, the king. The weaver submitted to the king that, according to the rule, the best of products should always go to the sovereign, he brought the garment to him, and begged to be patronised. The weaver demanded two lakhs of pagodas, but the king, astonished at his exorbitant demand, declined to buy the cloth. The poor weaver was utterly disappointed, for when the king declined to give his price, who else in the kingdom could be found sufficiently rich to buy it? So with a desponding countenance he returned, taking a short cut through the forest to reach his village. In the forest he suddenly met the Prince whom, however, he did not know to be a Prince; and the sudden appearance of the young stranger in the lonely wood made the weaver dumb with amazement for a minute. And his wonder was all the more enhanced when, with the utmost politeness, the boy warned the weaver against the dangers of the forest at that time of the evening, and invited him to his humble cottage in the forest. The weaver had never seen the Prince till then, and, to a certain extent, there was no other course to be adopted as the night had set in. The hospitality, so kindly offered by the boy, pleased him very much, and he followed him. After reaching the cottage, a long conversation followed. Our hero had only very rarely occasions to receive visitors, and whenever there happened to be one, he was most hospitable to them and devoured all the information that he could get from them. The weaver's story of his unsuccessful attempt to sell his costly *sari* entertained the

Prince. The Prince struck with the fine workmanship of the *sari* remarked that if his father the king had rejected this cloth and had thus disgraced Art, he (the Prince) was ready to buy it for the amount, and asked him to part with it. The weaver was almost dumb with astonishment. Such noble spirit, so sincere admiration of Art, he had seen nowhere: and he in his joy embraced the young Prince. At the next minute the weaver in a desponding tone said :—"But where will you find the money, my good Prince, poor as you are now and living thus in this humble cottage in a deserted forest?" But swiftly came the Prince's blunt reply :—"And what will you do with this cloth to-morrow, my good man! Simply lock it up in a box, I suppose, and leave it a prey to moths and worms. True: it needs no ghost to say that I have no money now. But Princes cannot always be thus living in huts. I am the only heir of my old father. Suppose I give you a document promising to pay you three lakhs when I succeed my father. Is that not better than a cloth idly locked up? Could anything be more plain than this?" The weaver was convinced. He understood the position of the Prince and his desire to own the cloth. He had not the least doubt that payment would be made in time. There was honesty in every syllable that was uttered by the Prince.

So the next morning the weaver returned to the village with a scroll in his hand for three lakhs and our hero presented the cloth to his old mother. She appeared in the public streets in that gaudy robe that day, and soon attracted the attention of the second Queen. The latter interpreted the change as a special favour shown by her husband in secret to her rival, and ran at once with tears in her eyes to Nanda, complaining of the insult offered to her by her

rival being shown special consideration. Nanda consoled her by denying all knowledge of the affair. The second Queen would not believe him. The curiosity of the King was greatly excited. He sent for his first Queen and made enquiries in person, and learnt that her boy met with a weaver the previous night in the forest, and purchased the cloth for three lakhs and made a present of the same to her. Nanda's astonishment on hearing this news knew no bounds. How could a poor cast-away Prince find such a big sum? He sent his Minister to the forest and that wise officer, having already learnt everything about the enterprising Prince, proceeded to the forest with the palace palanquin and a Guard of Honour. The Prince accompanied the Minister, and as soon as the palace was reached he got out of his palanquin and prostrated himself most respectfully at the feet of his cruel father. The whole Court was amazed to see such a noble, brave and charming youth. Nanda, too, saw for the first time his banished son. As everything about the Prince was extraordinary the King's heart melted away. "How did you pay the weaver, Sir?" asked Nanda. "I gave a document for three lakhs, my most noble father" was the reply. "How were you confident of ever paying that sum?" asked Nanda. "Why, as sure as sure can be," said the Prince, "for, I may die perhaps soon, or the weaver may die soon, or I may get back the kingdom by your grace, Sir." The King was highly pleased at this ready reply, embraced his long lost son, shed tears of joy, and placed him at that very moment on the throne.

XLIV

A TRUE HOROSCOPE

"Is a horoscope always true? Are there not sometimes some descendants of rich families for whom a poor station in life is promised by their horoscopes, and similarly some descendants of poor families to whom their horoscopes promise a rich status in life?"

Thus Ramaswami Sastri asked Gopala Josyar—an astrologer from the Salem District, and the latter in reply said:—"The science of astrology and horoscopy is always true to the last, provided it is correctly studied. Recently I came across a most wonderful case in which a son was born to a poor man of the Chetti caste in Salem, who already had five children. I was sent for casting the horoscope of the new-born baby. After arranging the several planets in their respective mansions in the baby's horoscope and studying their peculiar positions, I sat amazed for a few minutes. The poor Chetti questioned me as to the cause of my silence. He asked me with an agitated mind if the horoscope portended any evil to either of the parents? I said that it did nothing of the sort, but that the reigning planet of the horoscope of the new-born child indicated that he must be the master of many millions. Even at that moment, judged by the positions of the several planets, he must be owner of at least a lakh. Continuing, I said, "I am simply thinking over in my mind as to how this new-born babe can ever possibly attain to such an immensely wealthy state. I know well what in life is the exact position of your family."

The Chetti, who was equally struck with me at the unexpected and pleasing prospect, eventually gave me leave and I returned home.

Somehow this horoscope was greatly working in my mind. Judged by the science of horoscopy, the boy must have been born the heir to a large amount of money. But to the best of my knowledge, the Chetti family was poor. Is this science then not to be trusted? The more I began to think about this matter, the more my belief in the truth of the science increased, and like an expert of the Police Department engaged in detecting a grave crime I was day and night engaged in finding positive proofs in support of my strong belief in my science. My efforts were soon crowned with success, as the following wonderful incidents connected with that boy's birth soon came to my knowledge.

In a certain village near Salem there was an old merchant of the Chetti caste named Dhanapal Chetti, who was in the habit of selling raggi on credit to some of his customers and collecting the value of the grain thus sold at the beginning of every succeeding month. He had thus sold raggi to the value of a few rupees to a poor customer of his who lived at a distance of eight miles from his village. As usual, at the beginning of the succeeding month, Dhanapal went to collect the money from this customer. But the latter was unable to meet the demand then and requested Dhanapal to come to him again in the course of a week or ten days. This was Dhanapal's first disappointment. He had walked eight miles that morning for nothing and he must go over these eight miles again before he could have his meal for the day. So with a sad heart he was returning to his village. He

had walked scarcely four miles when he felt himself very much exhausted, as the midday sun was almost unbearable. At about 20 yards' distance from the main road there stood a shady banyan tree which attracted Dhanapal's attention. "Let me rest myself under the refreshing shade of that tree for a couple of hours and then resume my journey" thought he, and at once he proceeded to that spot. The excessive heat of the day and the hard exercise he had had that morning brought on sound sleep. He slumbered for nearly two hours, at the end of which he thought he saw a curious being, with braided locks of hair on its head, descend from the top of that tree. It appeared to be of huge but well-built shape and very majestic in appearance. "Dhanapal!" said that being, "at a distance of 20 feet due east of this tree and within a depth of 3 feet from the surface of the ground there lies concealed a pot containing gold. Dig it up please and deliver it to the person who has a large hole pierced in his ear (*Tollaikkadan*)." The curious being uttered the above with a smiling countenance. There was some indescribable truth in its look and sweetness in its speech. After having said thus the being ascended the tree again.

Dhanapal opened his eyes and found that he had been dreaming. And it was a very pleasant dream, being about money. But who was the person with a large hole in the ear? He racked his poor brains about it. To the best of his knowledge, he could remember none answering that description. In a short time he made up his mind not to trouble himself about this impossible person. If the money was found why should it be delivered over to that person? Dhanapal anxiously waited till nightfall. He was no doubt very hungry, but how could he, on that

account, give up the promised treasure? If the money was really discovered, he would come into possession of untold wealth all on a sudden.

As soon as twilight set in Dhanapal set to work and after a few minutes' turning over of very loose soil he came across a pot full of Ramtanka gold coins. With difficulty he raised the pot to the ground, and secured it in a gunny bag, covering it over again with his upper cloth. So, to all appearance, it was a bundle of gunny bag with a pot inside which might be believed to contain anything from poor porridge to valuable gold mohurs. He had four miles' distance more to cover before he could reach his village. That was an impossible distance for him to do then, as he was both hungry and exhausted and had a heavy load to carry besides. But suddenly a thought struck him. At a distance of only a couple of miles from that place there was living a poor daughter of his with her husband. He thought that the best and safest thing for him to do would be to go to her at once, find his refreshment there, and then engage a conveyance to proceed to his village. He reached his daughter's village about eight o'clock in the night. She was in an advanced state of pregnancy and to all appearance very healthy. There was none else in the house except her old mother-in-law, the other members of the family having gone to an adjoining temple to be present there during the occasion of a special feast. The son-in-law was in the village but he had not returned home at that hour. Dhanapal thought that every circumstance was favourable to him. He did not display any kind of anxiety about his bag. He did not wish to give any trouble to his daughter or her aged mother-in-law. After a few minutes' stay with his daugh-

ter he told her that he would leave his bag containing a molasses pot in the verandah of the house, take his food in the house of another relation of theirs in that village and return to her house soon to sleep. So saying he went away after carelessly placing the weighty bundle of supposed molasses in the inner verandah of the house.

A few minutes after he left, the daughter who was till then in perfect health appeared to become ill and soon brought to bed a son. The husband who returned home in time was at once asked by the mother to fetch a quarter anna worth of molasses to administer medicine to the daughter-in-law; but the latter said that there was no necessity for him to go to the bazaar for it, that he would find a big bundle of molasses desposited by her father in the verandah of the house and that a small quantity could be taken from it. The husband ran in haste and opened the bundle; but instead of molasses, a strange heap of Ramtanka gold coins met his eyes. He understood the trick at once, secreted and hid the treasure in a safe place, procured a small quantity of molasses from the neighbouring house to avoid delay and prevent suspicion and gave it to the wife. He then ran to the bazaar and purchased a few rupees' worth of molasses, filled up the pot with it and left it in its original place, without giving rise to any suspicion.

An hour after all this was done Dhanapal returned after having had his meal and called out his daughter by her name. She was then in her room. He was glad to hear that she had had a safe delivery and that the newborn babe was a son. But all his thoughts at the same time were on his pot. The daughter said that it was safe

in the verandah and that it proved very useful on that night in as much as her husband, without going to the bazaar, took out a small quantity of molasses from it for being administered as medicine to her. This news at once alarmed the father. He ran to his bundle at once. It was exactly where it was left. He opened it and it now contained only molasses, all the Ramtanka gold coins having disappeared. Dhanapal's state of mind could better be imagined than described. He had no voice to complain, having himself declared the contents of the bundle to be molasses. There was no use of speaking to his son-in-law about it. He was dumb for a while, when his daughter requested him to come in to see his fair grand-son. And the old mother-in-law too joined in the request by saying that of all the children born in the family the fairest was the new-born one. Dhanapal was after all a very kind relation. He accused himself for having forgotten all about his new grand-child and thought at the same time his daughter might give some clue to his missing treasure. And there he was right ; for, the moment that his daughter presented him with the new-born child Dhanapal shed tears of joy. It was the fairest child he had ever seen. Such supreme lustre and majesty it had even as a baby ; and, wonder of wonders, it had a large hole in its right ear. The words of the genius of the banyan tree rushed into his mind. The previous evening he had racked his brains for the person with a hole in his ear. He found no clue at all then. Now after six hours' time he held that very person in his hand in the shape of his fair grand-child. Though poor and a petty merchant, Dhanapal was after all a true philosopher. He at once decided that the treasure was never meant for his own use, that he was dishonest in having resolved to

utilise it for his own self and that it had reached after all the proper person indicated by the genius.

With a glad heart Dhanapal called in his son-in-law and before him and his daughter related his adventure. "So my son," said Dhanapal, "those Ramtankas belong to this child with a hole in his ear. Take care of what you have already secured for your son. It is no more your property than mine and when my grand-child comes of age, you had better deliver the property to him." The father agreed to do so, but at the same time brought out a handful of Ramtankas for all his trouble. But Dhanapal refused to accept the money as it was never meant for his use. All were highly pleased at what had happened.

And Gopala Josyar too was pleased for it was the horoscope of this fortunate baby that was submitted to him for examination. Is then the science of horoscopy untrue? No. As the reigning planet in the horoscope of the child indicated the possession of wealth, the necessary provision for the same was made by the kind genius of the banyan tree even before the birth of the child, which in this case happened in a poor family.

XLV

KING BHOJA'S HEADACHE

King Bhoja was one of the most celebrated sovereigns of India. He was so just, so wise and so learned, that he was supposed to be almost superhuman. He was the patron of poets and philosophers, and it was in his Court at Oojein that the nine gems of Sanskrit literature flourished. And Bhoja himself was a Doctor of Literature. Now, one day Bhoja visited a certain hermitage in the disguise of a *yogi.* But it was not long before he was recognised ; for there is nothing that can be concealed from the all-seeing eyes of sages. As soon as the sages recognised the king in the *yogi*, they showed him all the honours due to his position, and the sovereign was exceedingly pleased at everything he saw there. One morning, while going round the hermitage, Bhoja noticed a certain sage drinking a very large quantity of water, and asked him flippantly why he did so. "It is to expel moral evils from the soul, O king!" said the sage. "Rather a curious way," remarked Bhoja ; and the sage, in explanation, added :—"If a drop of water falls on a lotus leaf it assumes the semblance of a pearl, and yet the same drop, if it falls into a pearl oyster, becomes a pearl itself. But who can tell the good effects of water when it is poured into the body thus every morning. It washes away all accumulated impurities and gives the imbiber the purest soul. This is the one great secret of the greatness of the sages."

The King was astounded at what he heard, and was ashamed of his careless remark. It is quite true. The

influence of water on the body is marvellous. "Your Majesty may try it, if it so pleases you," said again the same sage. "I will," Bhoja replied, and after spending a few days in the hermitage he returned to his capital.

On reaching Oojein the King gave orders to the chief servant of the palace that a large jar containing good water should be placed near his bed every night, to enable him to practise the sage's method of expelling moral evils from the soul. And so matters continued for a few days, and the king had no reason to regret the arrangement. One day the servant, as usual, left this jar with water in the king's room. Now there was a small frog in the water, which, however, the servant did not notice. On the following morning, His Majesty too, in his hurry, did not examine the jar before drinking its contents. "What is it that I have done," said Bhoja to himself after a few minutes, for he perceived that there was something wrong in his inside. The poor frog in its wild struggles to escape, mounted higher and higher and finally got itself imbedded in the king's brain. And Bhoja became seriously ill. All the greatest and the most famous doctors of the realm hurried to the palace to attend on the king. But not one of them was able even to diagnose the disease. The king was in a state of unconsciousness almost. The pain was increasing every minute, but no human being seemed able to cure him. He kept pointing to his head, indicating thereby that the pain was there, though in his delirium he was not able to explain the same clearly. The learned doctors therefore came to the conclusion that the complaint was a serious kind of headache. But all their medicines failed to restore the king to health.

When it became plain that no man was able to render any help to King Bhoja, the gods held a council in the heavens and ordered Dhanvantri, their famous physician, to proceed to Oojein and to restore the monarch to health. Dhanvantri accordingly came down to the world, and disguising himself as a Brahman, appeared before the ministers of the king Bhoja. He was immediately conducted to the king's room, where he saw a great crowd collected before the King's bed. Thereupon he requested every one to go away, pointing out that it was impossible for him to treat the monarch in the presence of such a crowd. At the same time he promised to cure King Bhoja without failure, and there was something in the appearance of the new doctor that made every one believe him.

Then when the room had been cleared, Dhanvantri sat before the monarch, who was utterly unconscious of what was taking place before him. There was, however, a third person concealed behind the door, namely Kalidasa, the great Sanskrit poet, whose curiosity was such that he could not resist hiding himself in order to see what took place. Dhanvantri, seated by the bedside, at once applied an ointment to the head of the Monarch and waited a few seconds. He then most skilfully unscrewed the cranium of the patient and deposited it on the ground as if it were the upper lid of a box. And what did he see? There was the frog sitting quietly on the King's brain! The unscrewing was done in the twinkling of an eye, and similarly the screwing on again could be done. But how to remove the frog? A pair of pincers, would be easily suggested by any doctor. But the superior mind of Dhanvantri saw that if the frog was removed in that manner, it would come out dragging with it the whole brain of the monarch,

and death would be instantaneous. The more he thought of it the more difficult did the operation seem. The poet behind the door perceived Dhanvantri's difficulty and boldly uttered from where he was the following words:— "Place a vessel full of water near the king's head. The frog, when it sees the water, will jump of its own accord into the vessel."

"Excellent advice! And it is, after all, Kalidasa's superior intelligence that has saved the King." Thus said Dhanvantri, as he placed the vessel near the King. The frog at once jumped into the water. The brain was then carefully washed and the cranium screwed on in its proper position. Another application of the ointment made the monarch's head appear as if no operation of any kind had been performed on it. The King opened his long-closed eyes. "Kalidasa has excelled Dhanvantri," said the doctor from heaven, and disappeared without giving an opportunity for the poet and others to thank him. The next moment Bhoja sat up and announced that his headache had completely left him.

XLVI

THE STORY OF A FALSE ASTROLOGER

There lived in a certain village a beggar who was in the habit of going the round of the streets every morning to beg alms. One day while on his round one of the houses occupied by an old lady closed. The beggar made up his mind to wait until the door was opened and so sat on the pyal of the house. While sitting there, he heard a hissing noise inside the house, which was the result of some dainty being prepared. The beggar on hearing the noise said to himself " it is one *chupati* cooked." A second hiss followed. "This is the second *chupati*," thought the beggar. Nine such hissings in all were counted by our hero who concluded that nine *chupatis* were ready inside the house. A few minutes later the door opened and the old lady came out. The beggar in his usual manner exclaimed, " Alms for a poor soul ! Give me, O charitable lady! something to eat; offer of alms secures eternal felicity to the donor." The old woman in her own surly manner replied that there was nothing in her house to give him and bade him go. But the shrewd beggar, determined not to be so easily sent away, rejoined " Do not, O charitable lady! unnecessarily utter a falsehood. You have only a few years more perhaps to live in this world; why should you make even that short period a sinful one! Something tells me that you have nine *chupatis* in the house now ready for eating and can you not give one of them to this poor soul ? Would that not appease his hunger ?" This pathetic appeal of the beggar acted, of course, like a charm and had the desired effect. The

old lady was startled to hear the beggar state the exact number of the dainty she had prepared. Without speaking a single word in reply she ran in, fetched two *chupatis*, and gave them with a glad heart to the beggar, who after thanking and blessing the old lady went away.

But so far as the beggar was concerned the matter did not stop here. The old lady spread abroad the news that he was a clever and great astrologer. Her strong reason for this was that he had foreseen the existence of nine *chupatis* inside the four walls of her closed house. The news spread like wild fire and in every one's mouth was our hero's name as that of a great astrologer in the garb of a beggar.

Shortly after this event, a poor washerman of the village missed his only ass which, in spite of his careful search, could not be found. As a last resource he applied to the new astrologer for advice. The beggar was already aware that his name was being discussed by the village folk as that of a great astrologer. He was secretly glad of the fame that he was acquiring with no effort of his own. When the washerman applied for help, the astrologer put on a grave countenance and spoke as follows.—"You nust come again to-morrow morning. I must cast my ice to-night and find out from that the place where your ss is concealed." The dhobi paid his respects and took ave and our hero instead of casting dice as he gave out pent the whole night in search for the missing ass and o his luck chanced on the very spot where the animal was grazing. He thanked his stars, and was glad at the certainty of his fame as an astrologer spreading more widely and quickly from that day. He secured the ass

carefully, brought it to a ruined wall near his house and tied it to a stone. The poor washerman was only waiting for the approach of the morning and as the sun rose, he stood before the astrologer's house. On seeing him the astrologer put on a graver look than on the previous evening and spoke to the following effect. "The ass, if lost must be searched for near ruined walls, according to the rules of astrology. Therefore search near the ruined walls round about here and you will find the lost ass." On hearing this direction the washerman searched and, as the reader knows, he had not long to do so before he found the beast. But what was the dhobi's wonder! "O God!" he exclaimed "what a great fool I was for not having consulted this famous astrologer. I spent, without success, seven days and nights in searching for my lost beast. But by the clever Brahman's directions I found my ass in a minute. Surely astrology is a wonderful science. It cannot at all be false. Only we are in the wrong if we do not consult the astrologer." Of course, the soothsayer was rewarded, according to the means of the poor washerman. And the belief too that the so-called beggar was a clever astrologer in disguise gained ground all the more.

Near the village where our hero lived, there was a large town ruled over by a great King. One day, the gold cups which formed part of the table service of this King were missed. A most minute and careful search was made for them but without success. Several astrologers were consulted, also with no result. An officer of the palace who accidentally heard of the name of the village astrologer, mentioned, on this occasion, our hero's name to the King. A servant of the palace was despatched

forthwith to fetch the village astrologer. And this messenger ran in haste and stood before the humble door of our hero, who was astonished to hear that the King wanted to consult him. What to do ! To the credit of our hero it must be said that he knew his own worth, but the royal mandate must be obeyed ; and go he must, for good or bad. So he started, followed of course by the palace servant, and all along the way he went on muttering to himself,—*kanne pomo, mukke pomo* meaning either his eyes will be put out or his nose cut, should he fail to discover the lost gold cups. But fortune always favoured our hero. This exclamation of his all along the way was conducting him to his fortune, unknown to himself. Two of the palace servants named Kannan and Mukkan had jointly stolen the said cups and it was one of them, Kannan, who came to fetch him from the village and was then accompanying him to the palace; and when this servant heard the exclamation *kanne pomo mukke pomo* uttered so many times by the astrologer he argued within himself : " O! This is the very devil of a clever astrologer. Even before reaching the Court he has discovered the thieves to be Kannan and Mukkan and says now either Kannan or Mukkan will have to answer for the theft with his head. It is safer to make a clean breast of my guilt to this learned astrologer and crave his pardon. Perhaps he may be able to save me now when there is time yet. But if the palace is reached I can have no hope of escape. The wrath of the King can never be appeased." So arguing within himself, he fell prostrate at the feet of the astrologer and holding both his feet cried out:—"Save me, my God! and devise a means by which I may not lose my life. Your clear knowledge has

already enabled you to say who the criminals are. I am the unfortunate Kannan and Mukkan is in the palace. We both made away with the cups and have concealed them in the river-bed; we must not lose our lives and you are our protector." Thus begged in a most piteous tone the poor palace servant. Our hero discovered in the twinkling of an eye the whole truth of the matter and praised his stars for their unfailing help in times of difficulty. After musing for a while he spoke as if he was the incarnation of mercy. He said "Yes! The moment I saw you, I discovered signs in your face that you were one of the thieves and expecting this confession on the way, I did not tell you anything about it before you yourself confessed your guilt." This was after all a clever lie of the astrologer, but the simpleton Kannan was all the more astounded and our hero continued, "Remember then the lives of yourself and Mukkan are in my hands now; if you secretly give me the gold cups before the third day from this, I shall keep the whole affair a secret and not expose you both. And what is the gain after all in sacrificing two human lives? The King wants only his cups. I shall deliver them to him by some trick or other. But this arrangement between ourselves you should keep as secret." And what more did Kannan want? He promised the greatest secrecy. And our hero followed by Kannan reached the palace.

The King at once gave an interview to the astrologer. "Can you discover the lost cups?" asked the King. "Undoubtedly, Your Supreme Majesty!" replied the undaunted astrologer. "If I fail, I shall gladly give my head. Several such thefts, more difficult and left undetected

for years, I have successfully unearthed. I want only three days' time for performing some petty rites to discover the thief or the property. Give me a room, my most noble Sovereign, and order the necessaries for the sacrifice." The astrologer ended and added one hundred and one lies to his so-called previous adventures which can better be imagined than described. Suffice it to say that a house and the necessaries for the ceremony were placed at his disposal. Several servants of the palace, including Kannan and Mukkan, were waiting upon him; for the latter two had as much interest in getting their lives saved as the astrologer had in discovering the theft. Every one was anxiously waiting for the third day. Our hero had cleverly on the very first day secured the cups. On the night of the second day he had them concealed near a heap of rubbish in the back-yard of the house in which he was conducting the rites. At the appointed time on the third day the King, the Minister and other officers arrived. At the end of the rites, which were purposely made very tedious, our hero conducted the party to the back-yard of the house and requested them to examine a particular spot where the property stolen was brought and concealed by the thieves, on the night previous. "The thieves," said the astrologer "were not human beings; they were devils and therefore were beyond the control of the King for infliction of punishment." Thus the lost cups were discovered. Kannan and Mukkan got peace of mind. A thousand and one voices unanimously praised the clever astrologer. Many were the rewards which were showered on him. Everything went on well. The name of the wonderful astrologer spread throughout the length and breadth of the country.

When thus our hero was rising in fame, a sceptic Minister of the Palace caught hold of a caterpillar (called in Tamil *vittil puchchi)* and concealing it in his closed hands asked the astrologer to give out its name. " If you fail, what you did towards the discovery of the cups was all a mere humbug—a fact known to you perhaps previously but kept secret." What could our hero do now? In a moment he was suddenly on the point of losing all his past fame in astrology, though he more than rightly deserved to lose it. No one had known his name till now. Wherever he went he was only known by the name of the "clever astrologer." After making one or two guesses our hero moaned out *angum tappi ingum tappi akappattan Vittal Bhattan* meaning "Vittal bhatta after escaping here and escaping there was at last caught." The moment the words *vittal bhatta* fell from the lips of our hero, the sceptic Minister spread out his palm and exclaimed that it was exactly a *vittal* (caterpillar) that he was holding concealed therein and began to extol the rare merits of our hero. What our hero meant was, that he who was called Vittal Bhatta, had so successfully escaped several difficulties and was rising to fame. But after all the struggle he was now caught in a maze by the Minister. But the accidental verbal coincidence of the astrologer's name with that of the insect confused the Minister and made him conclude at once that the insect was rightly guessed. Of course our hero was always clever in taking time by the forelock. He understood everything and duly turned everything to his own advantage. There was never, afterwards, any occasion on which he was in fear of losing the honours gained. He lived and died the cleverest astrologer.

XLVII

MARRIAGES ARE MADE IN HEAVEN

It is a firm Hindu belief that every marriage in this world takes place according to predestination. As soon as a female child comes into existence in this world Brahma, the Lord of Creation, picks up the palm leaf on which the fate of a boy already born is written, and joining to it a blank palm leaf for the female child just come into existence, writes on it that that baby shall become the wife of that boy in due course. The two palm leaves are then knotted in their blank ends by a peculiar way, and form the horoscopes of the pair who are to be husband and wife in future when they attain their marriageable age. This is a very strong Hindu notion and the Hindu father, when he undergoes all the hardships of finding a suitable husband for his daughter, will often be heard to exclaim,—"O, I do not know to whom Brahma has knotted my girl, I shall search and find him out." And when he comes across several young men and after rejecting one after another, he chooses one, the father does not at all take the credit for his choice but resignedly says: "This is the young man already chosen by Brahma and all my endeavours till now had been to find him out." Sometimes the bridegroom-elect meets with an accident just a few hours before the marriage, or the marriage contract first made is suddenly broken and the next best person is chosen, and then the celebration of the marriage takes place. Of course, these are rare cases. And even then the orthodox Hindu will exclaim

with all sincerity that the original selection was not the party meant by Brahma, and that the second choice only was the husband destined to marry the girl. Thus the idea of predestination is a very firm idea among the Hindus, however educated they may be.

To illustrate this ancient belief the following story is narrated :— In the Pandyan country there lived a Princess named Mangaikarasi. She was the only daughter of her father, who was reigning then as King. She was a highly educated lady, but at the same time she was a very queer and self-willed girl. Whenever she left the palace for a drive in the town all the male inhabitants there must make themselves scarce. She must never see any man, as far as her eyes could reach. Anyone who disobeyed this rule was beheaded.

One morning she proceeded with her female attendants to the river Vaigai to bathe. Of course, the carriage driver was inevitable and he was one of the party. No other male was to be seen all along the way or at the bathing ghat. The Vaigai is not always a running stream, but baths take place in the springs dug out in the bed of the river. When the Princess finished her bath and got up from the spring she noticed a sage-like person sitting on a prominent sand-bank in the middle of the river engaged in knotting together certain long grasses by their ends. Though the sage by his high position deserved all the marks of respect from a Princess, the idea that her strict orders had been broken was very prominent in her mind. Her rage knew no bounds. She despatched her driver to ascertain who the sage was. He returned with the news that the sage was Brahma himself, engaged in his duty of knitting the pairs that had to

commence their lives as husbands and wives in this world. Mangaikarasi grew furious. She considered that the sage's reply was a hoax, and to ridicule him to the utmost, she said to the bandy man :—"Run again, Sirrah, and ask him to whom he has yoked my fate. Take care that you report exactly what he says. Let us fool him to the top of his bent."

On receiving the order the driver ran again to the sage and questioned him to that effect. That holy person, in his turn, grew doubly furious, and taking up two long darbha (reed) grasses he knotted their ends in the very presence of the bandy-man and spoke angrily as follows : This is the grass representing the Princess and this other represents you. I have yoked her fate to yours. This is not what I do now. I have done it already on the very day of her birth. I do it again to cure her of her impertinence. So she must in due course marry you.

After having spoken thus the sage rose and without caring a bit for the princess turned his back upon her and walked away.

The tongue of the driver stuck to his palate. How to report the news to the Princess or how to conceal it! He was at the same time a blunt man with a stout sense of duty. So he was returning to the Princess very pensively. The way in which he was returning, and the long face that he had assumed after hearing the sage's reply had already irritated the Princess.

"What did that fool say, sirrah?" roared she.

"How can I reveal it before your august presence?" muttered the servant.

"Come out exactly with what he told you or else I will murder you on this very spot."

Thus thundered Mangaikarasi and the servant seeing no hope of escape most submissively repeated what the sage had said.

When he ceased speaking her anger knew no bounds. The horse whip was near her: she took it up and whipped the man right and left till his whole body began to overflow with blood. He fell down in a swoon. It was now that she saw how cruel she had been with a poor blunt servant. Water was poured on his face and he came back to his senses. "Fool! Fly away now for your life. You must never turn back. Walk as fast as your legs would carry you and get out of the Pandyan dominions. You to marry a Princess! That fool of a sage said so and you had the audacity to repeat the same. Thank your stars that my anger has subsided and that I permit you to depart."

Of course, the carriage driver thanked his stars, and ran for his life. He never stopped till he reached the very end of the Pandyan dominions Mangaikarasi commanded her handmaids to keep a strict tongue over the whole affair and the whole business was entirely forgotten after a time. The poor bandyman disappeared, we know not where, and reached perhaps a country where he had not to fear the terrible whip. Several years passed away and even the Princess and her few attendants who were her confidants entirely forgot the whole episode. The Pandyan King, Mangaikarasi's father, had a long and prosperous reign and died in due course. His only heir was the Princess. But she could not ascend the

throne. So the Ministers of the Empire assembled together and according to the rule in vogue decorated the chief elephant of the Palace and placing a garland in its trunk sent it out in search of a successor to the throne. The rule alluded to was that that person on whose neck the elephant threw the garland was to be acknowledged as the due successor to the throne. Of course, he must also marry the princess and thus continue the Pandyan line. Thus, according to this rule, the palace elephant was started with the necessary ceremonies. A few chosen Ministers and a regular guard of soldiers and musicians were following it at a respectable distance. Many ambitious young men presented themselves before the beast: but the elephant heeded them not. It was journeying on and on for several days till it almost reached Trichinopoly. Near the entrance to that city there was a big building, and on its outer " pyal" a fair young man was sleeping, for the day had not dawned completely yet. The elephant approached that person and garlanded him. At once the musicians of the Pandyan Band began to play. The chosen Minister explained to him the change that had come thus unexpectedly over his fortune. All Royal honours were paid to him at once and he was brought with all formality to Madura.

The other Ministers at Madura and all the subjects of the Pandyan Kingdom were highly pleased at the choice made by the elephant. The Coronation ceremony was hastily gone through and the wedding rites also formed, in this case, part and parcel of the Coronation ceremony. Mangaikarasi was highly gratified at the very sight of her lord who was so very beautiful and grand in appearance

and thanked her stars for her good fortune. The busy day was drawing to a close: the double festivities of the Coronation and the wedding were slowly subsiding. Mangaikarasi was awaiting her lord in the royal bed-chamber. After a heavy feast the world was retiring to its necessary rest. The Princess alone was anxiously busy in her bed-chamber, arranging her several musical instruments to regale her lord with music. Sweet-meats of several kinds, fruits of every description, and cup full of milk were standing on a neat table near the bed. As soon as the door opened and her lord entered the bed-chamber the Princess gave him a hearty welcome and taking her seat humbly by the side of her lord regaled him with the best of music. Questions and answers followed afterwards as to the departments of knowledge with which each was acquainted, and the Princess at once concluded that her husband was no ordinary personage, but a profound scholar deeply versed in all branches of learning. The more she thought the more she admired; and the more she heard the more she loved her lord. She had reserved for the last the question as to his parentage, as it would be most impolite to put it at the very beginning of the meeting:—"May I know whether my respectable parents-in-law are living? May I know how many brothers and sisters-in-law I have the fortune of owning in this world? May I be made acquainted with the name of the happy village, country and Province which had the fortune of giving birth to my lord?" etc., etc.

When Mangaikarasi ceased, her husband smiled and taking off the coat that covered his body replied:—" My dearest Queen, do you not see the scars that have not yet

disappeared? I am your bandyman that was your humble servant once. You have not totally forgotten the sage's affair, I suppose. I ran away then and reached Trichinopoly. I was adopted there by a learned mendicant as his son. He was not only my father but my teacher in all the departments of knowledge for the last seven or eight years. Perhaps the sage was right and your whip was what was most wanted, for it drove me away to gather learning and thus to qualify myself as your future husband. I thank you and your whip most heartily and my love to you will never decrease, even by a minute particle for your having mercilessly thrashed me once.

The Princess stood spell-bound. She was, of course, as deep a scholar as her lord. She recognised at once the superior power of fate, and begged a thousand pardons of her lord, whom she sincerely loved for all his low origin. She fell on his feet and shed tears of joy. The whipping episode was hushed up between themselves. Even the handmaids who had witnessed it once were entirely kept in ignorance. Thus the new King and Mangaikarasi had a most happy life, for fate had joined them together and the ways of fate can never be scrutinised. But the royal pair had several occasions to allude between themselves to the whipping incident, and laughed and laughed and loved and loved each other all the more for it. They had several beautiful children and lived for a long time as the happiest pair in this world.

XLVIII

BITERS BIT

A Noodle Story

In Tanjore there lived a rogue of the first water, practising roguery as his profession, and living solely by it ; so much so that he was known throughout the country as the Tanjore rogue. No one dared to have anything to do with him, for people felt sure of falling into his clutches and becoming duped by him. After living for a long time in Tanjore as a true devotee to this profession, the Tanjore rogue found it impossible to keep his life and soul together any longer there. Doors were shut against him, as soon as it was known that he was approaching a house. Men and women ran and hid themselves in unknown places, as soon as they perceived him at a very great distance. His name was in every one's mouth, and life any longer in Tanjore became an impossibility. So the rogue resolved to try his fortune in some other place, and, calling his wife, addressed her thus :—

"My dear, we have been living hitherto very happily here. Till now I have had a very successful profession, and found a way to earn thousands. I had an easy part to play. With very little labour I was always duping others. But now the days have changed. People have become more wise. Very few fools come my way now to be duped. My name is a byeword, and instead of finding a doubtful livelihood here I have resolved to go elsewhere,

leaving you to live upon what little we have saved. I need not tell you that I am so clever that I will earn thousands in no time, and soon return to your side."

"My dear husband," replied she, "you have spoken like a true hero. I give you my full permission to go, for I am sure that you will succeed wherever you may go, though my confidence of your success in this city has been completely lost by our sad experience of the last few months."

Thus saying, she ran off and soon returned with a big clay-ball and a handful of cooked rice: a proceeding which puzzled the rogue himself. She then rounded off the clay-ball and applied to its surface the cooked grains so nicely and so cleverly that the minutest eye could not distinguish the clay underneath. The rogue now saw what she meant.

"Done like a rogue's wife!" said he. "Language fails me to express my praise, my dear."

"Am I not your wife, my lord?" said she smilingly. "Why should the rice at home be wasted? Why should you not, in starting out to earn a livelihood by your profession in a distant place, begin to practise it on the way? You can meet with some fellow-traveller on the road, and exchange with him this ball of rice, and thus commence to live by your noble art from the very starting point."

"May the God of Roguery shower his boons upon you, my dear! May he keep you who has outwitted me in my own art, safe till my return!" Thus saying, the Tanjore rogue took leave of his wife, and, with the ball suspended on his shoulder, started towards the north.

Now, there was a second rogue, called the Trichinopoly rogue, who had made his position in Trichinopoly as impossible as had the Tanjore rogue in Tanjore. With the permission of his wife the Trichinopoly rogue, too, had started to try his fortunes in another country. He also must have something for the way, and so his wife brought him a small brass vessel filled with sand to within a quarter of an inch of the top and scattered over it a thin layer of raw rice. Both the rogues met. The patron God of Roguery had so arranged it. For how long could he keep apart such master gems of his own creation? They met as strangers for the first time in their lives on the banks of the river Coleroon.

"May I know who the gentleman is that I have the happiness of meeting to-day?" asked the Tanjore rogue without knowing who the stranger was.

"I am a traveller for the present, a native of Trichinopoly," was the answer which the other rogue gave.

He then came to know that the stranger was a native of Tanjore and a traveller like himself. Beyond this they knew nothing of each other, for each was careful in his own way. By this time they had both bathed in the river and finished their ablutions. The Tanjore rogue was waiting for an opportunity to get his ball of rice exchanged, just as the other rogue was with his vessel of raw rice; for each had seen what the other had for his dinner. The Tanjore rogue first began:—

"That disreputable wife of mine gave me cold rice tied up in this bundle. I am not in good health, and if I eat cold rice I fear I may fall ill. I do not know what to

do. There appears to be no village near us. If I could only get some raw rice I could cook it in your vessel."

The Trichinopoly rogue was very glad to hear this suggestion, and as soon as the Tanjore rogue had finished speaking, he said:—"My friend, I am sorry for you. Yes, when you are not in good health eating cold rice will be bad for you. In travelling especially, the first thing to be cared for is health. I am very hungry. If you give me your rice, I have no objection to give you my rice and the vessel, too. What matters if it takes some time? You can cook and eat, and if there is anything left over, you can give it me hot."

Each felt himself elated in having deceived the other, and the exchange was readily made, as if they had been friends for a long time. The Trichinopoly rogue was the first to discover that he had accidentally met a person who had outwitted him in his own art. He turned round to see what the Tanjore rogue was doing, but he had not yet discovered the trick that had been played upon him, for he was collecting dried sticks to light a fire. Said he to himself:—"Oh! he has not yet discovered the trick. I shall leave him alone till he does it."

So thought he, and he had not long to wait, for as soon as the fire began to burn, the Tanjore rogue took the vessel to the side of the water to clean the rice before setting it on the fire. When water was mixed with the rice the trick was discovered, and the Tanjore rogue stood dumb with astonishment for a minute. Without the slightest suspicion he had been outwitted. He directed his eyes towards the Trichinopoly rogue, who smiled and approached his friend.

"Was it proper on your part to have deceived me thus?" was the question which the Tanjore rogue put to him.

"Was it proper on your part to have deceived me thus?" was the reply he received.

They then fell into a long conversation and many were the tales and adventures which each rogue related about himself to the other. In this pleasant conversation they spent a long time, forgetting hunger, fatigue and exhaustion. After full five *ghatikas* of their beloved subject, said the one rogue to the other :—

"It is now plain that we are able men in our own way, and that we have started to earn a livelihood in foreign parts. We must continue friends from this moment. We must have a common object and work together for it. So from this minute we must embrace each other as brothers in a common cause."

"Agreed," said the other, and from that minute they became friends.

The sun had now set and the two men walked as fast as they could to some place where they must find something to eat. It was a jungle tract of land, but at last the sight of a dim light cheered their hopes. It was a lonely cottage in that wilderness, and its sole inhabitant was a bent old woman of three score years or more. She was an old lady who had seen a good deal of calamity in her younger days, and who had retired to that forest to lead a retired life. But even there her greed followed her, and she was a seller of puddings in the forest. For though the place appeared gloomy during night, it was not so

uring the day. Many neatherds frequented that part in e daytime with their cattle, as the place afforded a good pasture, and the old woman sold them puddings and made money, saving a good sum in time. The rogues knocked at the door and demanded entrance.

"Who are you?" asked the woman from inside.

"We are travellers in search of a place for food and rest" was the answer. Again the same question was put, and again the same answer given. For a third time the question was repeated and when the same answer was a third time given the door flew open. The rogues gave money to the old woman, who fed them sumptuously. After the meal was over the strangers related to the old lady how they had come out in search of adventure, and how they would be highly obliged if she would advise them on that subject. The old woman was flattered.

"My dear sons," said she, "you seem to be young men. I have no children. You can live under my roof as my own children. I will feed you well, and impose upon you a very light task in return. I have a very quiet beast, a cow, which one of you will have to take out to graze. There is no pasture near this cottage, so you will have to take her out a *ghatika's* distance near to a tank, where there is abundant grass. There are fruit trees near the tank, under which you can protect yourself from the sun, while the cow is grazing. This is a job in which one of you must be engaged. As for the other, I have a few beds of cabbages in my backyard, which must be daily watered. A few buckets of water will quite suffice. If one of you manages the cow and the other waters the

cabbages, you can remain under my roof as long as you like, and pay nothing for your food."

These terms seemed very lenient to the two rogues. The grazing of a quiet cow and the watering of a few cabbage plots must be easy even if one had to do both. The bargain was soon struck, and the two rogues had more than enough to eat that night, and fell sound asleep.

The morning dawned, and both the rogues had something for breakfast. The old woman promised to give them a very sumptuous hot meal at night, and started the Trichinopoly rogue, with something to eat in hand for midday, to graze the cow. The Tanjore rogue had to water the cabbage plots in the backyard, and so was sure of his midday meal at home.

The Trichinopoly rogue started with the cow, and had a very quiet business of it till he reached the tank. He thanked his stars for their having conducted him to the old lady, for what trouble was to be expected in grazing a quiet cow. Cows in India are proverbial for their meekness, but there are exceptions. As soon as the tank was reached, the rogue untied the cow and it began to graze even more quietly than he expected.

"What a fine time I shall have?" thought the rogue.

But in a moment all his hopes were changed. Suddenly the cow took to her heels and for fear of losing the animal, and, as a consequence his evening meal, the rogue followed it headlong. But he was no match for the cow, for she had not thus been led out to graze for

several days ; it might have been even for months. She was far in advance of the rogue, and knowing that he could not overtake her for some time, stopped to graze. The rogue slackened his pace, and walked up slowly, gaining in the meantime, fresh vigour to recommence the race, in case there was any occasion for it. The brute did not disappoint him. It was grazing again quietly.

"Poor thing ; it was, perhaps, terrified at some object at first, and so ran off so wildly. She is now grazing quietly according to her nature. I shall reach her in a minute," thought he, and he reached the cow, but, unfortunately, not to catch her. Just as he was on the point of catching her the cow again took to her heels ; again the rogue began the race ; again the cow stopped and began to graze ; again, though not with so much hope as at first, the rogue slackened his pace, regained strength, and was almost at the point of catching her. He had traversed nearly twenty *kos* by the time that evening approached, and he had gone round the big tank and its neighbourhood nearly a hundred times. But at last, fortune seemed to pity even the worst type of rogue, and, as if more out of pity than anything else, the cow allowed itself to be caught.

"I shall never bring you up here again to graze. I shall, instead, give such a glowing description of you to my friend the Tanjore rogue, and change my job with him to-morrow. Watering a few plots must be extremely easy."

Thus thinking within himself, and composing his face, for with a dismal face one cannot play a devil's part, he slowly led the cow to the cottage of the old woman.

His whole body was in pain. Several thorns had found seats deep in his feet. He had hitherto led an easy life in roguery, but that day seemed to be a punishment for all his sins. Still, with a composed countenance he returned home.

Meanwhile, the Tanjore rogue in the backyard had only to water four or five green plots. "I could do it in half a ghatika," thought he.

There was a hand *pikotta* (country water-lift) at which he had to work, and the condition was that he should not cease work till the plots were full of water to the brim. He was at work till midday, and then, found that the water baled up was not even a quarter of the quantity required!

"What? My hands are already red with work. I have pain from top to toe, and yet the plots are not a quarter full. What can be the reason?" thought the Tanjore rogue, and tried his best to find out the cause, but without result.

Now this was all clever trickery in the old woman of the wood. The fact was that in the midst of the plots, the old woman had placed subterranean tunnels by means of which the water was guided underground to a long distance, and there used for irrigating several acres of land. This was so well managed that there was not the least room for an suspicion. The Tanjore rogue with all his cleverness wa not able to find the trick out, though he surmised ther was some trick at the bottom. The old woman came to him at midday, and took him very kindly inside the hous

for a light meal, and then requested him to proceed to his task. Even before a *ghatika* was wanting to evening, and as if she took the greatest compassion on our hero, she visited him again, and spoke thus :—

"My son. Don't mind the trouble. You can do the rest to-morrow, cease work and take rest."

He thanked her for her kindness, left the *pikotta*, and came to the pyal outside the house. Sitting there, he began to chew betel-leaves and areca-nut, and as he was engaged in this, the thought passed and repassed his mind :—

"What a fool I have been? If I had taken out the cow, I would have had a better time of it to-day than the tiresome duty of watering these plots. There comes my brother rogue with a joyful countenance. Perhaps he has had a very happy time of it. I shall give him a good description of my work and change my job to-morrow with him."

Just as he was thus speaking, the Trichinopoly rogue approached the house with the cow.

"How did you fare to-day, my friend?" asked the Tanjore rogue.

"Oh, I have had a most happy day of it. What fine fruit trees there are on the banks of the tank there, and I had no difficulty at all of any kind. I unloosened the cow to graze and passed the day sleeping under the shade of trees, and eating fruit. What a fine beast this cow is, too. It grazes quietly like a child."

Thus said the Trichinopoly rogue, and the composed way in which he told his tale made the Tanjore rogue believe what he said. Soon the other rogue began:—

"Oh! you do not know what I had to do. It was all over in a quarter of a *ghatika*. "Half a dozen potfuls of water to each plot was all that was wanted in the business. So I passed the day in sleep and chewing betel. Come on, sit down; you had better have some."

The cow was tied up in its proper place, and the two rogues sat down on the pyal of the cottage in the twilight. The pain and hardness of the work of the day were so predominant in their minds, that each easily believed the work of the other to be easier than his own, and each suggested an exchange of work, which was readily accepted.

The morning dawned. According to the mutual agreement the Tanjore rogue took out the cow to graze, and the Trichinopoly rogue went to water the cabbages. Each soon discovered how he had been duped by the other. In the evening they again met.

"What, brother! Was it proper on your part to have deceived me thus!" asked the Tanjore rogue, and the Trichinopoly rogue replied:—"What, brother! Was it proper on your part to have deceived me thus?"

Then the two rogues came, a second time, to an agreement that they should not direct their ingenuity to deceiving each other; but that they should always act in accord. They resolved to do so, and held a long talk as to how to deceive the old woman, and walk away with all her money. The old woman overheard all this conversation.

"I am too clever for such tricks," thought she, and was careful in her own way.

Now the old woman was herself an extremely clever rogue, and the very next morning, as if of her own accord, she called the rogues to her side, opened her big box to them, showed them all the gold, silver and copper that she had there, and promised to bequeath the whole property to them, in case they pleased her by their work. The rogues, then, though their task was very difficult, wanted somehow to continue it for a short time, waiting for an opportunity to plunder the woman. But she was not a person so easily to be made the subject of their deception.

One noon, when both the rogues were absent on their duty, she buried, in a very secret corner of her house, all her treasure, and locked up in the box heavy things, like broken pieces of stones, old rotten iron, etc. The box and the seal and everything was left in its original shape. After the rogues had their supper that night, she called them both near her and slowly whispered to them thus :—

"My sons, as you have made up your mind to live with me like my own children, you must little by little, know all my ways. I keep my box of money in the house during the white half of the month ; in the dark half of the month I throw the box in the well. It is always better to be safe, as we live in a wood. Kindly help me, my dears, by removing the box to the side of the well, and by dropping it down there gently without making noise."

The rogues did not suspect anything, for more or less, the reason of what she did seemed very natural and

so they assisted her in removing the box to the well side and dropping it in. The old woman held up the light as they did the work.

At about midnight the rogues went to the well. The Tanjore rogue stood on the brink, while the Trichinopoly rogue entered by the aid of a strong rope, one end of which was in the hand of the Tanjore rogue. As everything had to be done very secretly the *pikotta* was not resorted to in order to get down into the well. The Trichinopoly rogue went into the water and brought up the box in one dive, but he said that he had not yet secured the box, and that he must have a second, a third, and a fourth dive. Meanwhile he opened the box in the well itself and found by touch that himself and his friend at the mouth of the well had been deceived. It now struck him that he might have been deceived again by the Tanjore rogue. What guarantee was there that he would be safely lifted up? So he addressed him as follows:

"My friend, our miseries are at an end. What immense treasure this box contains! It is very heavy. When I am ready I shall shake the rope which I have attached to the box. But be very careful in drawing up the box, for if the rope breaks in the middle, the whole weight of the box will fall on my head and I shall die. After drawing up the box, let down the rope again for me and draw me up."

The Trichinopoly rogue then proceeded to seat himself in the box removing all the stuff in it for the purpose.

The Tanjore rogue drew up the box, and as soon as it reached the surface, he lifted it up, placed it on his head

and went off as fast as he could. His object in this was to evade the Trichinopoly rogue, and take the whole property for his own use. When he had gone far enough to begin to feel safe from pursuit a noise fell on his ears :—

"Walk a little slower, my friend."

"What ! has the Trichinopoly rogue followed me ?" He stopped for a minute, then quickened his pace a little. Again the same words fell on his ears :—

"Walk a little slower, my friend."

Again he stopped, and, putting down the box, discovered the Trichinopoly rogue, whom be had imagined all this while to be pining away at the bottom of the well, in the box itself.

"Was it proper on your part to have deceived me thus ?" asked the Tanjore rogue.

"Was it proper on your part to have deceived me thus ?" replied the Trichinopoly rogue, and added that if he had not adopted that plan be would have been left in the well, as proved by the action of the Tanjore rogue.

For a third time they came to an agreement that they should not deceive each other thus, but it was of no avail. They soon parted company, and went away to different places to try their skill independently.

XLIX

THE SUBHADAR OF THE COT

In the town of Tanjore there lived a clever Brahman, named Kesava Bhat. His means and attainments were very humble. He was a priest, and earned on an average a couple of *fanams* every day by his profession. Half of his income, *i. e.*, one *fanam*, he spent for his household expenses, and with the other *fanam* he held every night Council on a Cot in the back premises of a big mansion in Tanjore, between the first and tenth *ghatikas*.

The expression "Council on a Cot" requires some explanation: and in order to give this it is necessary to give a brief description of the mansion in the back premises of which Kesava Bhat held his council. In the west high street of Tanjore there was a millionaire called Navakoti Narayana Chetti. His mansion was seven storeys high, and extended for a mile from west to east. The back premises were in the east high street, and were almost unnoticed at night. To these Kesava Bhat resorted every night at the second *ghatika*. He had taken into his service four artisans—a carpenter, a cobbler, an oil-vendor, and a turban-tier. He paid each of these a quarter of a *fanam* for their services which were as follows:—

The carpenter would bring a small cot, for Kesava Bhat to sit upon, the oilman would light two torches and supply them with oil sufficient to burn till the tenth *ghatika* of the night. Kesava Bhat would take his seat on

the cot between the second and the third *ghatika* of the night with torches burning on either side of him. The cobbler would then approach and cover his feet with a pair of newly-made costly Brahman shoes. The turban-tier would bring a costly turban, and tie it on the Bhat's head. Besides these four, Kesava Bhat had engaged four peons, on the promise of high salary of 10 *pons* each per month, to attend upon him every night between the second and the tenth *ghatikas*. Now the Bhat called himself the Subhadar of the Cot, and instructed his servants to say so to any person who might question them as to who the person holding the council was.

He held his council with his eight servants—four peons and four artizans—till the tenth *ghatika* of the night. Soon as the *tas* (gong) announced the tenth ghatika, the turban-tier would take away the turban from the head of the Bhat, the cobbler would take back the shoes from off the Subhadar's feet, the oilmonger would put out the lights, and the carpenter would carry away the cot. Kesava would then stand up in the clothes in which he approached the mansion at the second ghatika of the night, would dismiss his other servants—the four peons,—ordering them to wait again in readiness at the proper time next night, and would return home.

Neither the millionaire nor any one of his servants noticed what was going on, and no one was able to detect the poor priest Kesava Bhat in his transformed state of the Subhadar of the Cot with a costly turban on his head, newly made Brahmani shoes on his feet, sitting in council in the palatial quarters of a millionaire. So our hero secured the title of the Subhadar of the Cot, and the

townsmen began to recognise him as such only during the night, and thus passed away one month.

Poor Kesava paid every night for his temporary seat, turban, shoes, and light, but his difficulty was to find forty *pons* at the end of the month to pay to his most obedient, willing and faithful peons; for, in fact, they had behaved as such, and had the greatest regard for their kind and liberal master. The undaunted Kesava Bhat, however, told them on the last night of the first month that they would get their pay the next night. But as he was himself living from hand to mouth, and had wasted the one *fanam* that he could have saved every day of his Subhadari, he knew of no way to get out of his mess. He return home, and instead of disappointing his trustworthy peons he resolved to commit suicide and thus end his miseries.

With his mind thus made up, and without telling his wife what he intended to do, he went all alone to the garden of his house in the dead of night and tying a strong rope to the loftiest branch of a tree was on the point of attaching the other end of it to his neck to suspend himself, when a voice was heard checking him from his rash act.

"Desist from your mad resolution. Dig at the root of this tree, you will find seven pots of gold each containing a lakh of *pons*."

"Who can have uttered these consoling words? It must be the great Paramesvara. I shall dig, and if I do not find the pots, there is time enough to execute my resolution."

Thus argued the Subhadar of the Cot and came down from the tree, and he dug as he had been told, and to his great astonishment he found the pot very near the surface. He took them in, and secured them at once, without informing even his wife of the vast amount of treasure he had obtained.

On the first night of the scond month, Kesava Bhat gave his peons not only ten *pons* each as their salary, but made them presents of five *pons* each and addressed them as follows:—

"My faithful servants: you know well how liberally I pay you for the short service I take from you. The more faithful you are to me the greater will be your reward. I am going soon to entrust to you an important task. You must deliver some treasure to Indumukhi—the favourite concubine of the emperor of Vijayanagar. I shall bring it to-morrow. You must take it and deliver it to her, saying that it is a present from the Subhadar of the Cot, for one day's expenses. You must be ready to start to-morrow for the consignment. Engage seven carts to carry the treasure, and be ready here to-morrow night. You may go home now at once."

Thus two of the four peons were sent away a little early that night. And at the usual time the council broke up, and our Subhadar returned home. He reserved a hundred *pons* from each of the seven pots, and packed the remainder in seven cases, locked and sealed them well and wrote the following letter that very night:—

"The Subhadar of the Cot to Indumukhi—greetings. We have heard of your unparalleled beauty and the high

favours lavished upon you by the emperor o Vijayanagar. We can, of course, bear no comparison with the emperor; but, as becoming our own humble position and as ardent admirers of your world-famed beauty, we send you as a present, for one day's expenses of your ladyship, a small contribution, which we hope you will accept. Signed thi day the 30th day of the month of Vaisakha of the ye of Manmatha, in our mansion the Dhanavilasa—Kat hadar."

he letter too was put in a cover and sealed. ght, the two peons, with money for their expe way, started with the treasure and the letter, a 'ijayanagar after journeying for a month. tion for one day's expenses was delivered saf Induumukhi read the flattering note, counted the treas and was dumb with astonishment. Who could be person who has remitted such an enormous quantit wealth for her expenses for one day? What must be own worth? These thoughts passed and re-passed mind, and she was not able to get any clear informat from the peons that had accompanied the treasure. she set down the Subhadar of the Cot to be the rich man in the world, and resolved to send him, as a toke of her apprec ion of his gift, some present in return. Sh went into her reasury, and after a careful search founc a costly throne set with diamonds and other precious gems. She thought that this would be a proper seat for the Subhadar of the Cot. So she brought it out, carefully packed it, wrote a letter thanking the Subhadar, and intimated to him that she was to be considered henceforth as one of his humble maid-servants, and that

she also in her own humble way was sending him a return present. She rewarded the peons that came from the Subhadar amply, as befitting their position as servants of the Subhadar, and entrusted the throne and the letter to them..

The joy of the peons knew no bounds. In one trip they had almost made their fortunes. It is only such high persons that they should serve, thought they. In their eagerness to reach home and thank their master, they performed the return journey in twenty-days, and safely delivered the present of Indumukhi and her note to the adar of the Cot.

Ie was delighted at the receipt of his own gift by m st beautiful of womankind and of her return present. nus t could he, our humble Brahmani priest, do with onc hrone? His fertile imagination soon suggested a o disposing of the gift. He had heard of a yet more mous beauty called Nurzana, who was the chief of the ncubines of the emperor of Delhi. He resolved to send throne presented by Indumukhi as a gift to the famous cubine of the Delhi emperor. He repacked the precious ne, wrote a letter similar to the one that he had written months previous to Indumukhi, and sent all the four ns to Delhi with the packet and the note.

In the course of three months the capital of India was ached, and the note and the present duly delivered. Nurzana was astounded to receive such a costly throne, which even the emperor of the whole of India had never owned, as "a small gift" from the Subhadar of the Cot. She had a strong desire to visit so rich a man in person

before making up her mind to return amply and suitably the honour done to her.

So she thanked for the occasion the Subhadar of the Cot, and wrote in return that her mind would never rest at ease till she had paid her humble respects in person to him, which she would be able to do in the course of a year or two. She rewarded the four peons, and sent them away with the note. They had now nothing to take care of on the way except the note and the presents they themselves had received, which no doubt were very large. They returned as quickly as possible and delivered the note. Of course, our hero was extremely pleased, and to a certain extent, easy in his mind, for as he had [illegible] no return presents from Nurzana, he need be at no [illegible] to devise means for their disposal. But there was [illegible] something to vex him. Nurzana had promised to [illegible] in the course of a year or two! What should [illegible] But why trouble oneself for an affair which was to happen after a year or two, or which perhaps might never happen. So the Subhadar forgot the anxieties of the future, and went on holding his council. Thus for a year almost [illegible] business went on. The pomp and sudden wealth of [illegible] four peons became a subject of talk everywhere. [illegible] Subhadar of the Cot and his council in the mansion [illegible] Navakoti Narayana Chetti attained the greatest publicity. The millionaire heard of its existence, and on a certain night he visited his back premises and discovered the sham council. He became highly enraged and ordered his servants to seize the Subhadar. At the appearance of these men, the faithful servants of the Subhadar fled for their lives; he became a prisoner of the millionaire.

Alone with the Subhadar, the millionaire enquired into the cause of his impertinence, and the Subhadar explained to him that he had a fancy to do as he had done, and had been successful for almost a year. He was careful not to mention a word about his notes, presents, etc., to Indumukhi and Nurzana.

Navakoti Narayana Chetti pitied the poor Brahman, and as he had committed no offence of any kind, laughed at his thirst for so empty a title as Subhadar of the Cot, and as a punishment for his pride engaged him as his head cook!

Poor Kesava Bhat! Whither had his Subhadari gone? What had become of his faithful servants? Why did not the great Paramesvara aid him now? The solution to these questions was not difficult. His star had been in the ascendant and so he had enjoyed all these privileges. But now his *Karma* (fate) had made him head cook of the millionaire's house. From the very next day he rose early in the morning, bathed, performed his ablutions, attended to the kitchen arrangements of Navakoti Narayana Chetti's house, had his food first, according to the prevailing custom as he was a Brahman, and then went home to return to resume his evening duties in the kitchen. He was naturally a clever person and so soon secured influence with the millionaire and his establishment. His faithful peons, though they were not able to assist him on the night on which he had been taken prisoner by the millionaire, soon discovered him, and remembering that they owed their own fortunes to their service once under him, soon joined him. And our hero too though now reduced, soon found his way to

employ them in the establishment of Navakoti Narayana Chetti.

Thus a month passed, and by this time our hero became all in all to his master. His proficiency as cook was of the best, and he was not wanting in other respects. The advice that he now and then gave when his master consulted him in any important matter was of the best kind. He was clever, obedient, willing and an honest servant, and the millionaire was pleased with him in every way.

Navakoti Narayana had no children. To the attainment of this object, he was preparing for a pilgrimage to Benares, advised to do so by our hero. He started soon with an establishment befitting his position as a millionaire. After a month's journey, and after visiting several sacred shrines on the way and bathing in all the sacred rivers he had to cross, the millionaire and his party reached the banks of the Tungabhadra. The great city of Vijayanagar was not to be missed on the way. Navakoti Narayana sojourned in it and wished to pass a few days there. One evening while driving about the streets of the town, he saw a very fine mansion and an incarnation of beauty, as it were, slowly moving on the topmost storey of it. Whose mansion was it, and who was the beauty that he saw? These were easily answered. It was the palatial residence of Indumukhi, and the object that met his eyes was none other than that famous lady herself. To some extent he was consoled to hear that she was after all only a concubine and not a lady of family. It cannot be denied that he was smitten by her charms, and longed for her company. It was not after all difficult, as she was only a courtezan; but how to meet her? She was so

zealously guarded that any attempt to send a note to her would be only falling into the hands of death. So, Navakoti returned home thinking he must pine hopelessly, never attaining the object of his desire. Alas! the wickedness of rich men! How vile they are sometimes! Blinded by wealth and considering nothing unattainable if they can pay in money for it, they are led away into the worst of sins and into the vilest of ideas! Navakoti thought that he would be quite willing to sacrifice his then crores of wealth, if he had in return the company of Indumukhi for one moment at least. No doubt it was the confidence of the possession of such wealth that made him think so. But how to secure that happiness? Whom to consult and how to act? The millionaire was perfectly at sea at these points, and was worrying himself. "And where care lodges sleep will never lie." Thus passed two or three days. He had not consulted his cook, for the matter was rather a delicate one, and the cook had never been resorted to by his master on any previous occasions on such subjects. But the whilom Subhadar of the Cot, with his natural shrewdness, perceived the change, and questioned the master about the cause of it. After a good deal of hesitation Navakoti told him all about it, and said that if he only assisted him towards the attainment of this object, he would give him his whole wealth, receiving back only so much as was necessary for his maintenance every month.

"Do you stick to your words?" asked the cook. "Undoubtedly" answered the millionaire.

"Then I shall not be unkind. It is enough if you give me one-half of your wealth and restore me to my Subhadari

in your back premises. I shall at a moment's notice make Indumukhi wait at your doors."

Navakoti was not at all able to believe him. He thought it was all a joke. But the cook at once told him to give him all his dress and ornaments, and directed him to retire like a common servant to one of the chambers adjoining the bed-room. Kesava Bhat at once robed himself as Navakoti Narayana with all the costly cloths and jewels, and summoned the four peons who had served him when he was the Subhadar of the Cot. He robed them also in costly attire, and stationed them near his cot. The two he had sent during his Subhadari to Vijayanagar he called close to him. He gave them a letter to take to Indumukhi. Navakoti Narayana who, as a common servant, was in the next room, was watching all his acts, and did not understand the proceedings. But blinded by love he put up with his position as a servant in his own house. In a minute the lady Indumukhi herself appeared and stood before the cook, who, of course, never directed his eyes towards her, but seemed to regard her as a mere worm.

"My lord, I learnt from your note that you are a sojourner in this city; having once amply tasted of your lordship's liberality, I have come to wait upon your worship's orders" said she, and stood with the humility of a slave before the monarch of an eastern court.

Navakoti could not believe his eyes and ears: but before he could think the following words fell upon his ears:—"If you are true to your salt, I order you to retire at once to the adjacent room and give your company to our servant

waiting for you there, as a token of your fidelity to us. Of course, you must have already concluded that we are much above your humble company."

The sentence was not yet finished before Indumukhi retired like a slave obeying commands to the room pointed out and Navakoti Narayana in the amazement that seized him did not even perceive her approach. The night soon passed away, and the day dawned. Before the servants could know anything of the previous night's affairs, Kesava Bhat was in the kitchen and Navakoti Narayana in his own place in his temporary residence. It is not necessary to state here that Indumukhi, too, was safely back in her own mansion.

Who was now the millionaire? The Subhadar of the Cot! But of his grace he allowed freely, out of respect for the millionaire, half of his property to him. In a few days the pilgrimage was resumed. Benares was reached. To the credit of our hero he requested the millionaire not to consider that there was any change in the positions of the master and servant till they returned to Tanjore. So Kesava Bhat was all the while still only master of Navakoti Narayana Chetti's kitchen. After staying for a month in the city of Benares the party commenced the return journey. Ever since that wonderful night at Vijayanagar, when a word of command from the Brahman to Indumukhi was enough to make her run like a slave to the closet of Navakoti Narayana, the millionaire had the greatest respect towards him. He considered him to be naturally a great person. On several occasions he asked our hero as to the cause of his powers, but with no success. The more he thought of that night the more he admired Kesava Bhat. That a

woman of the position of Indumukhi should have obeyed at one word his head cook never ceased to astonish him. What was after all his own wealth? He had only been able through his cook to secure the services of the woman. He never felt for the loss of his property, for he had no children to whom to leave any property.

So, soon after reaching Tanjore, Navakoti Narayana Chetti with pleasure parted with half of his property to our hero. The big mansion of the millionaire was also divided into two, and the eastern half, in front of which the Brahman had once held his council on the cot, came to his share. There was none to question him his right now to hold his councils in his own house! Kesava Bhat, too, changed his humble manners, and became in every way the Subhadar of the Cot, and regularly held his councils, with only this difference, that he no more paid quarter *fanams* for his temporary seat, shoes, etc., but had these as his own. He was now a rich millionaire himself, with his title the Subhadar of the Cot firmly established. Thus passed a few months.

One day while sitting in front of his house, Kattil Subhadar saw a person approaching him most humbly, and lay down a letter. He opened and read it. It was a letter from Nurzana, and to his utter bewilderment she had written to say that she would be in Tanjore on the morning of the third day afterwards to pay her respects in person to the Subhadar of the Cot. It was happy news that a lady of the position of Nurzana should travel all along the way from Delhi to Tanjore and reflected great credit on the name of the Subhadar. He was not now a mere empty man with an empty title. He was a millionaire

and had a house and establishment requisite to honour to the grand ... an idea of his wealth and power ... But Keseva Bhat had concluded that she had ... him to be equal, if not superior, to the emperor in riches, whereas he was after all only an ordinary millionaire. So imagining that he would not be able to do her proper respect, and trying, if possible, to drive her away without her seeing him, he devised various plans within himself. In the end he found that they would be of no avail. The best solution out of any difficulty was suicide, and agreeably to his nature he went to his favourite tree. The ever-merciful god again appeared in the form of a voice in space and demanded an explanation for his bold resolve.

"I want to send Nurzana away without her approaching Tanjore" was the explanation.

"Have you any scheme for doing so?" asked the voice out of space.

"Yes," replied our hero undauntedly, "but I cannot execute it unless I have divine assistance."

"What is the sort of assistance that you want" demanded the great god.

"I want the assistance of Rambha, Urvasi, Tilottama, and other divine nymphs for a couple of *ghatikas* on the morning of the day after to-morrow. They must be collecting cow-dung on the skirts of the Trichinopoly road. Nurzana will be approaching Tanjore early on that morning. She will observe them and question them as to who they are. The nymphs must state that they are the sweepers of the house of the Subhadar of the Cot. This

is all that I want. After a lapse of a couple of *ghatikas* in this world the nymphs can return to heaven" said our hero.

"Agreed" said the great god, and the voice died away, and the Subhadar, too, extremely delighted that every thing was working well, returned to his palatial residence and spent a happy night.

The appointed day came on. Early in the morning, even half a *ghatika* before the rising of the lord of the day, one hundred nymphs of the divine world were seen on the skirts of the Trichinopoly road, near the town of Tanjore, collecting cow-dung in baskets made of gold. The retinue of Nurzana was marching first, and after them came the palanquin bearing Nurzana. Everyone in the company was struck at the unparalleled beauty of the maidens, and there was a dead stop in the march. The palanquin also stopped. Nurzana lowered the shutters and wanted to know the cause of the sudden halt. Before asking any one about it she herself saw about fifty beauties gathering cow-dung in golden baskets.

"Am I moving in fairy land" thought she. To ascertain the truth she beckoned one of them. At once several came moving up. Nurzana asked them who they were.

"Your supreme ladyship. We are the sweepers of the house of the Subhadar of the Cot, and we collect cow-dung, as is our custom, to smear our lord's house with in the morning," replied they, and even without waiting for any answer, they went about their duty. Nurzana was in utter confusion from top to toe.

She first of all ordered her men not to advance one more step from that spot without her orders. She gazed upon the beauties, who were only after all the sweepers of the house of the Subhadar. They appeared more like so many streaks of lightning in human shapes.

Said Nurzana to herself:—"If after all, the sweepers of the house of the Subhadar of the Cot appear to be as fair as the divine nymphs themselves, what must be the beauty of the ladies of the palace of the Subhadar? Turn the palanquin towards Trichinopoly."

The object of our hero was accomplished. There was no more trouble for him. He lived in happiness for a long time with his well-earned reputation and wealth acquired from Navakoti Narayana.

L

THE BUFFALO MADE OF LAC

Mugdhe ! payopi dugdhe trinam
apy-asnati tarnakam Sute,
Nadindhamasya mayam jatu
na janasi jatushi Mahishi.

"What is the use of this miserable existence. I am poor, extremely poor. My wife is every day teasing me for ornaments, while I find it very difficult to keep my life and soul together. But, poor woman, how can I blame her? When she sees her neighbours rich, she curses her fate and imagines that she must also become rich one day or other and wear jewels. Alas ! She has no idea of my difficulties in Tanjore. There is no scope for earning money here. The old-fashioned donations to Brahmans on religious or festive occasions and other charities are slowly disappearing with the rapid progress of this dark *yuga*. So, if I mean to better my prospects, I must quit this place. I must proceed to Benares. They say that in the whole of India, that sacred city is the only place where charities still flourish."

Thus contemplated a needy Brahman of Tanjore, when suddenly his wife entered his room with her child of four or five years. The girl was crying and pulling her mother towards her by the end of her cloth.

"Is the morning meal ready, my dear ? I am unusually hungry to-day," said the poor Brahman. Replied the

wife :—"Ready! What else have I to do in this house? Daily I get up at five in the morning, sweep and clean the house and the utensils, bathe, cook, eat, and sleep. Again I get up the next day, and the same routine is repeated. Last evening Uma, the daughter of Appavaiyyar, came down here to invite me for her brother's marriage. What a fine necklace she has? They say that gold sells very cheap now. How well would our child appear, if, instead of standing bare like a palmyra-tree, she had a few ornaments to wear. We cannot try for many, for we are not rich. But one or two jewels, those most necessary for the ears and the neck should be made."

At this point the bewildered husband smiled and tried to take up the child to play with it. But the wife, dragging the girl towards her, continued, "O Gauri, thus your father deceives you, if we begin to speak about ornaments. Do not approach him."

But the child said: "When will you make me a necklace, papa?"

"Soon, my dear girl. Come here." Then the conversation changed to other subjects, and in a few minutes the whole party was reconciled and happy.

But the Brahman's mind ever remained ruffled. He resolved to improve his condition in the world by some means or other, and the course he thought the easiest was to proceed to Benares. He soon informed his wife of it, and promised to return as speedily as possible with loads of money and jewels. He also requested her to take special care of the house and their daughter Gauri. The

wife assured him that she would take the best care of the family. Our hero was easy at heart, started for the sacred city, and reached it safely.

He spent two years on the banks of the Ganges, and accepted indiscriminately all kinds of donations. It is considered very objectionable to receive certain gifts, e. g. oil, buffaloes, etc.; and owing to this belief the accompanying fee offered for receiving such gifts is generally large, as an inducement to accept them. Our hero's object was to make money. Who would perceive how it was made? So he freely accepted them, and was amassing a large amount ot money. In less than a couple of years he had made nearly Rs. 5,000. How glad will my wife be to receive me with so large an amount, thought our hero, and started on his return journey to Tanjore. When he had reached Poona it occurred to him that his wife would all the more be pleased if he brought her some ready-made jewels instead of jingling coins only. So he sent for a goldsmith, and, reserving only the necessary money for his journey, gave him all the rest to be converted into two gold necklaces of a hundred beads in each.

"Your orders will at once be executed, my lord," said the wily jeweller who had a most honest face. Like an obedient and honest servant he received the money, appointed a time for the delivery of the necklaces, and on the day before they were due he gave them to our hero. There were gold beads one hundred in number in each; the weight was correct, and the quality of the gold the same as that of the gold originally purchased for making these jewels.

"You are the most honest and punctual goldsmith I have ever seen. It is rare to see one of your type in your art. Unfortunately I have not reserved any money with which to reward you for your punctuality," said the Brahman, and the goldsmith after thanking him for the kind words, took his leave.

Our hero soon reached Tanjore, and had a happy meeting with his anxious wife and child, for had not the long-absent husband returned with two beautiful necklaces of gold? The wife and the child each took her necklaces. The former went into the house to cook the usual meal, and the latter outside to play, and to show to her neighbours her father's present. Sitting before the fire, the wife took the necklace from her neck, and weighed it often in her hand, and the more she did so the more she began to suspect that all was not right about it. There was no harm in examining one of the beads, thought she, and she took one off the string. She put it into the fire, and after a second there was a slight fizz and smoke, and it began to burn like lighted lac. She was horrified to see that her husband had been duped by a wily goldsmith. She pitied him, and, after some time, related in a calm way the trick that had been played upon him. But the poor Brahman's peace of mind was gone as soon as he came to know the trick. The idea that all his hard-earned money had been thrown away made him mad, and he had afterwards one fixed idea in his head, that goldsmiths are never to be trusted.

On the morning of the third day, after the discovery of the trick, he asked his wife how she had managed to live during his absence in Benares. Said she:—" I bought

a buffalo from Ponnasari, the goldsmith, that lives in the Car Street."

"What! from Ponnasari, the goldsmith."

"Yes, my lord. From its milk I made butter, and from the sale proceeds of the butter and *ghi* I managed to live very comfortably. She gives us two measures of milk every morning and evening."

"You poor innocent woman, you have not examined it. It is not a buffalo. It is a buffalo made of lac."

"No, my husband. It gives us milk, and, therefore, it cannot be made of lac."

"Therefore, I say, women are fools. What if it gives you milk? It is still made of lac. You are a fool not to see through the tricks of goldsmiths."

"No, my lord. It grazes upon grass; therefore, it is not made of lac."

"O my good wife, you have no brains to guess at the tricks of goldsmiths. I say it is is still made of lac. Say no more."

"You stupid woman. You do not know the tricks of these goldsmiths. In your own innocent way you believe the animal to be a living one. No. Whatever you may say, I am as certain as certain can be that it is still made of lac. Now hold your tongue and gainsay me no further."

The poor wife could only pity her lord for his state of mind. It was impossible for her to convince him by

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THE STORY OF KESAVA

In the declining days of Dvaparayuga there lived, in a certain village near the Kollimalai Mountains, a poor Brahman family, consisting of a husband and wife and half a dozen children. Most of the inhabitants of the village were more or less poor, and the poorest of all were the family just mentioned. Almost every day the father would go out begging and return with enough rice for a thin gruel. The hungry children had their portions first, and whatever remained was shared between the parents. None of these children was able to help the family in any way, as the eldest was a boy of only thirteen years of age. For what after all could a Brahman boy of thirteen do in the way of helping his family ? For the caste rules at the end of the Dvaparayuga were very strict. He could not dig, nor bear a burden nor do any labour which could bring one or two *fanams* as wages. The only assistance he could render was to accompany his father with a begging bowl, and this he sometimes did. Thus the family had very hard days to struggle with, and at last the pangs of hunger had become so great that the mistress of the family took her lord apart one day and spoke to him thus with her eyes swimming in tears :—

" O Kesava, how long are we to endure this misery ? Day after day and month after month, I have been mos anxiously working forward for a mitigation of our sufferings. But the great God has not yet been pleased

any argument, so much was the goldsmith's trick reigning predominant in his mind. She went to the backyard, dragged the poor animal into the house, made a small cut in one of its ears, and produced the red blood as evidence that it was a living animal. Her husband, as soon as he saw the blood, broke out in a most vehement language: "You foolish woman! Do you still continue to think that the buffalo of Ponnasari is not made of lac? What you show me now is blood, you think. Is it not of the colour of lac, and is not Ponnasari's buffalo a buffalo made of lac? Do you, too, want to deceive me?"

This is the story told to account for the following well-known verse:—

Mugdhe! payopi dugdhe trinam
apy-asnati tarnakam Sute,
Nadindhamasya mayam jatu
na janasi jatushi Mahishi.

"O innocent woman. What if it gives us milk, what if it grazes upon grass, what if it bring forth calves; you do not know the tricks of goldsmiths. It is for all that a buffalo made of lac."

Surely, we must have been the greatest of sinners in our previous births, and we must now try our best to alleviate our hardships by some penance. I will try my best to collect whatever may come in the shape of alms and maintain the children while my lord should go to some unfrequented spot in a remote jungle in the Kollimalai mountains and there propitiate the deity in such a way that our poverty will be removed from us in this birth. We must live above want for at least a few days before we die."

"Agreed" said Kesava, and on that very day he started for the Kollimalai mountains. He chose an unfrequented spot. Tigers and bears were howling round about him, but he did not consider it more dangerous than hunger. He sat down, motionless as the stump of a tree, with closed eyes. Birds warbled sweet notes round about him and beasts of prey howled, but he heeded nothing. His whole attention was in the contemplation of God. For months he remained in the same posture. His eyes once closed were never opened. He became absorbed in contemplation, and whether he suffered from hunger or thirst he never knew. Creepers sprouted up round about him and encircled his neck, and birds built their nests on his hair. Thus passed ten months.

On the first day of the eleventh month a certain person in the garb of a mendicant stood before Kesava and asked him to open his eyes. Kesava obeyed and saw a most holy person standing in the shape of a *sanyasin* before him. He felt himself to be in the same state of health as when he had sat down for penance, but he knew not how long ago. The mendicant ordered Kesava to relate his story

"My lord" said Kesava, "I am a pauper with half a dozen children. They are all dying of hunger. Give me enough to feed them on and to live above want. This is all my prayer."

"Undoubtedly, your request will be granted," said the great God, for it was no other than the Almighty himself, who had come down in the shape of a *sanyasin*. Having thus spoken, he placed on Kesava's head a bag of rice and ordered him to go home. He then disappeared. Kesava was greatly pleased at the dawn of divine day on him, and, though weak, he had strength enough for the journey. He was very intelligent, and understood at once that the *sanyasin* before him was the great God himself.

So Kesava reached his home with joy and reached his house at evening. He called aloud to his wife by name, and asked her to help him in taking the bag down from his head. She did so, but when he lifted up his head there was another rice bag on it! That, too, was soon brought down. And as soon as it was taken down there again appeared a bag. A fourth, fifth, sixth bag appeared in succession, and were taken down, and then the matter grew hopeless. Bags began to appear *ad infinitum* and poor Kesava had no time to be relieved of his burden, or to go in to refresh himself. He was thoroughly exhausted, and asked his wife to go in and give him something to eat, while he remained outside with his burden.

Of course, there was no rice at home, but his wife took a small quantity from one of the bags, and ground it into flour in a handmill. She collected the flour, but, though the whole quantity was collected in a small heap, more

still kept lying round the mill ! She now divined the secret and cooked what she had already collected into a cake in all haste, and returned to her lord with it and a little water to drink.

Kesava was standing with both his hands uplifted holding up the bag. So his wife broke a portion of the cake aud thrust the bit into his mouth. She also gave a spoonful of water to help him to chew it. With all the difficulty of a heavy burden on his head Kesava managed to chew the bit of cake and thus swallowed his first nourishment for ten months. As soon as the first mouthful was gulped down, what was his wonder to feel a similar bit of cake still in his mouth. He showed it to his wife and she at once became alarmed. She gave him, however, another spoonful of water. Soon the second bit also was chewed and swallowed down. But again a similar one appeared. His suspicions were now confirmed. Without end, bit after bit of the same size as the first appeared in his mouth. He became exhausted after swallowing a dozen and fell down dead on the ground, with the bag still sticking to his head like a tree cut at the root.

The sorrow of the poor wife can be better imagined than described. The hundred bags of rice already lowered down from Kesava's head were lying in piles. She had given him only a bit of a single cake, and that had multiplied itself into a dozen and killed her lord. There he was lying a corpse with the horrible bag still sticking to his head.

The villagers had of course assembled and seen everything that had transpired. To a certain extent they

understood it and looked upon the death of Kesava as a great calamity. But the dead body had to be cremated. So they made arrangements and prepared a pyre of green leaves, and set on it the body which had the bag still sticking to its head. Four stout men bore it to the cremation ground. The funeral pyre was ready and the burden was set down. But there was at once a similar burden on their shoulders. They threw it down and again a similar one appeared. They were bewildered and soon there were one hundred dead bodies of Kesava lying on the ground and still there appeared to be no hope at all of the matter coming to an end. They cursed themselves for having thus got themselves involved in Kesava's affairs. The whole village was horror-struck. It was at this moment that a *sanyasin* suddenly made his appearance on the cremation ground. He approached the astonished villagers, and enquired of them the cause of their misery, and they related the story.

"Very well, my friends! Can you point out the original body of Kesava which you brought here from his house?" said the mendicant.

The villagers tried their best, but could not succeed, for one body was so like the other. They pleaded their inability. The mendicant then poured a potful of water on all the dead bodies, when they all disappeared, and the original Kesava rose up with the bag still on his head. The astonished villagers now regarded the mendicant as a God-send to help them, if not the very God himself, and followed Kesava with his bag to Kesava's house. There they found Kesava's wife just recovering from her swoon, and on hearing the story of her lord's return, she fell

down on the feet of the mendicant and begged of him to grant her lord without the bag on his head."

"I shall do more than that for you, madam," said the sanyasin. He threw a handful of water on Kesava's head, and the bag dropped down.

The mendicant next demanded the original bag that was brought from the Kollimalai mountains to be pointed out to him. Here, too, there was the same inability and failure. So the mendicant poured a vessel full of water on all the bags, and they all disappeared, leaving only one behind, which was the original bag.

"Let this single bag be emptied in your granary, and the contents of your granary will never decrease. The quantity that you take out will at once be replenished then and there, and thus you will live above want."

Saying thus the *Sanyasin* vanished, and the whole village understood that it was all the work of God. They praised Kesava for his devotion and good luck, and ever after Kesava lived a happy man with his wife and children and beyond want.